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## **REALITY IN RELIGION**



# REALITY IN RELIGION

By

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*The Quillian Lectures for 1927  
Delivered at Emory University*

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## PREFACE

THE chapters of this book were written by way of preparation for the Quillian Lectures, which were delivered at Emory University, April 4-10, 1927. The lectures were delivered extemporaneously, and so much of the substance of each chapter was used as could be brought within the hour. It will be obvious to the reader that each subject is treated more fully than would have been possible in the brief time allotted for delivery.

Help has been gratefully received from many sources, and the writer has endeavored to give due credit at the proper places within the book. However, four men might be mentioned as having been especially helpful—Dr. James W. Lee, Dr. Douglas Clyde Macintosh, Dr. Henry Nelson Wieman, and Canon Burnett Hillman Streeter. As an indication of the universal trend toward a scientific treatment of religion, it is worth noting that the Churches represented by these writers are, respectively, the Methodist, the Baptist, the Presbyterian, and the Episcopalian. The reader will readily detect other names which might properly have been added as having given special aid in developing the theme of the book.

The author is greatly indebted to a dozen publishers for gracious and ungrudging permission to use the quotations found in the volume; to the Faculty and Trustees of Emory University for the invitation to deliver the Quillian Lectures and for the privilege of sending forth the book with the name of this great institution of learning upon it; to the President,



Faculty, and University community generally for an appreciative hearing and innumerable courtesies; and to his wife for preparing the manuscript, catching slips of the pen, and suggesting improvements in expression.

GILBERT T. ROWE.

NASHVILLE, TENN., May 10, 1927.

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I  
THE NATURE OF RELIGION



# I

## THE NATURE OF RELIGION

RELIGION is reliance upon the divine. It is more than a recognition and acknowledgment of dependence, for there is in it active and responsive trust. In "The Birth and Growth of Religion" George Foot Moore lays down four characteristics of religion: "(1) Man's belief in certain powers that do things to him; (2) belief that these powers are actuated by motives similar to his own; (3) belief that he can induce these powers to behave in such a way as to help him or refrain from hurting him; (4) action according to these beliefs."

Brightman ventures the following definition: "Religion ought to be characterized by the feeling of dependence on a personal God and dominated by the will to coöperate with God in the conservation and increase of values."<sup>1</sup> There is communion between the human and the divine; there are interests to be held in common; values precious to both God and man must be increased and conserved.

Religion is as deep and wide as human life. In intensity it reaches to the bottom of man's being, and in extent it covers the whole history of the race. In his book to which he gives the fitting title, "This Believing World," Lewis Browne exclaims:

Strange potency, this thing we call Religion! It came into man's world untold centuries ago, and it is still in man's world

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<sup>1</sup>"An Introduction to Philosophy," p. 321. By E. S. Brightman. Henry Holt Company.

to-day. It is still there, deep and tremendous; a mighty draught for a mightier thirst, a vast richness to fill a vaster need. No matter where one turns in time or space, there it is inescapably. Wherever there is a man, there there seems to be also a spirit or a god; wherever there is human life, there there is also faith.<sup>2</sup>

After a careful study, facilitated by constant contact with the natives of Africa throughout a period of twenty years, Le Roy came to the conclusion that all people have had a religion, which included belief in God, ceremonies, and moral principles. He found everywhere, even in the Dark Continent, belief in a supreme Being as the creator and preserver of all things, in the fundamental principles of morality, and in forms of worship, including sacrifice and prayer. In his book on "The Religion of the Primitives" he says that his long inquiry has convinced him of "the fundamental universality, permanence, and identity of religions" and expresses the belief that mankind universally has felt the religious need because the whole of religion is rooted in the very nature of man.

Man everywhere eats, loves, and worships; his abiding interests are food, family, and God. The picture of a community or tribe engaged in a hard struggle for bread, oblivious to the finer interests of love and religion, is not true to life. Primitive man has been disposed to give too little care to his bodily needs rather than too much, and his attention has been directed to getting mated and to engaging in worship as much as to obtaining food and shelter. When Darwin found a group of savages half-starved and suffering through lack of bodily comforts, he

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<sup>2</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 23. The Macmillan Company. Used by permission.

asked, "Why don't you work?" The reply he received was, "Sun too hot, day too long." It was a natural question for a civilized Englishman, but the savage does not attach the importance to work that the civilized man does. He loves to hunt, fish, and fight, and he spends his long leisure in inventing cosmogonies and brooding over the problems of existence. Browning's description of Caliban lying prone on his stomach in the warm sun and meditating upon Setebos is true to fact. Man has always had in his life as large a place for religion as for food.

One of the favorite hymns of an earlier day began:

Religion is the chief concern  
Of mortals here below.

The tone of the preacher in announcing this hymn often suggested that, while religion ought to be the chief concern, in fact it was grossly neglected by the majority of the congregation. But it is literally true that, throughout the entire history of the race, man has given more thought, time, and struggle to religion than to any other concern.

Religion not only holds its place in the reflections and meditations of man as he thinks upon his destiny as an immortal being; it is rooted deeper still in the impulses which man shares with the whole animal world. Man cannot cease to be religious without denying not only that which is most truly human within him, but also those impulses without which the animal could not live and develop. The roots of religion are as deep as life itself. Canon Streeter shows the significance of these impulses, as they are moralized and exalted in religion.



Man, especially philosophizing man, proud of being so much more than an animal, has tried to forget that he is animal at all. Aware that morality often means refusing to follow the dictates of instinct, he has overlooked the fact that the highest morality is not the negation, but the sublimation, of natural instinct. "First that which is natural, then that which is spiritual." There is an immense difference, but there is no absolute breach of continuity, between the care of the cat for its kittens and the tenderness of the mother for her babe, or between the attachment of the antelope to the herd and the loyalty of the citizen to his country. When instinct becomes consciously moral, it becomes something infinitely richer; it becomes aware of its own nature and of its own value; and with every such advance that value becomes greater—but there is nowhere a complete breach of continuity. But, just for that reason, if we ask the meaning of that element in the Life-Force which expresses itself in such instincts, we shall expect to find it in what the highest has attained rather than in that toward which the lowest seems dimly to be groping. That inward urge which prompts the mother bird to feed her nestlings before herself does not reveal its real quality until we contemplate the Buddha renouncing the bliss which he had found in order to teach the way to miserable men. The instinct which makes the sentinel of a flock of mountain goats watch while its fellows feed yields up its meaning when we look at Socrates choosing death rather than escape from prison in loyalty to his country's laws.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, religion has not a precarious existence. Its place is as certain and secure as that of any other interest or value. There need be no fear that future generations may repudiate it. Some have tried to eliminate religion from the world's life, but they have never succeeded. Comte started without it, but he had to come back to it. Even Positivism could not go forward without worship. Man has always been and always will be religious.

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<sup>3</sup> "Reality," p. 172. Macmillan.

All outward circumstances  
May be different,  
But there lives no man,  
Nor ever lived one,  
Who, in the silence of his heart,  
Feeling his need,  
Has not cried out,  
Shaping some prayer  
To the unchanging God.

The more intelligent people grow, the less superstitious they become, but not the less religious. There is no danger that a knowledge of the laws of nature will turn the mind of man away from God. Naturalism is a philosophy which interprets being as material substance. It is as old as Thales, who thought that water was the original stuff out of which all things are made, and it does not depend upon wide knowledge. As people grow more intelligent they may have less regard for established cult, custom, forms of thought, and modes of worship, realizing that these are man-made, but they will not be more indifferent to the great questions of human relationships and destiny. People generally are not less religious to-day, less regardful of God and their fellow men, than they were in the days of Israel when every individual was regarded as a part of the elect nation, or in the Middle Ages when the whole population was baptized and considered Christian. Many more now refuse to recognize a particular cult or creed as constituting religion, but the number of people who have genuine reverence for the divine and respectful interest in their fellows has never been greater at any time in the history of the world. Intelligence will cleanse religion of superstition, but it will not injure, much less destroy it.

Of course, if religion had been inserted into humanity at some time in the past, it might at some time in the future be thrust out. If there had been a long period in which the race existed and developed without religion, there might come a time when the intruder might be recognized as an alien and banished. If religion were a tiny stream taking its rise among the Hebrew people and continuing only in Christianity, the vast waters of universal human nature might flow over and absorb it. But religion is not that. It is not a new-comer. It belongs with humanity. It is ineradicably intermixed with the warp and woof of the nature of man. The religion of Israel was not a solitary instance of genuine communion with God, though it was the best and truest expression of the religious life of the race at the time. Sir James Frazer closes a brief preface to "Folk-Lore in the Old Testament" with these words:

In the present work I have attempted, on the lines of folklore, to trace some of the beliefs and institutions of ancient Israel backward to earlier and cruder stages of thought and practice which have their analogies in the faiths and customs of existing savages. If I have in any measure succeeded in the attempt, it should be possible to view the history of Israel in truer, if less romantic, light as that of a people not miraculously differentiated from all other races by divine revelation, but evolved like them by a slow process of natural selection from an embryonic condition of ignorance and savagery.<sup>4</sup>

Some may infer from the points of likeness of Israel's religion to the religions of other nations that all alike were equally human and that there is nothing divine in any of them, and there was something in the attitude of Israel to encourage such an inference. If

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<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. viii. Macmillan.

the chosen nation claimed to have the only fellowship with the divine that existed and it was discovered that other nations made the same claim and displayed many of the same qualities, it is possible to leap to the conclusion that Israel was wrong in claiming any contact with the divine and to suppose that no religion is real. But it is more reasonable to infer from such similarities that the same God that was in contact with the chosen nation was also in contact with other people, and that all religions are in a measure true and real. The kinship of religions indicates that religion is of the very substance of human nature and that man is everywhere in communion with the divine. Religion is surer and more certainly permanent because of the very fact that it is not confined to one race or nation. Rufus M. Jones quotes T. Rhondda Williams, of Brighton, England, on the fundamental capacity of man for communion with God:

His spiritual root goes down into the soul of eternity; everything in his experience is related to something that transcends that experience. The human spirit cannot be exhausted of significance, because it is rooted in the universal life of God. There is no such thing as mere human nature. This is why neither physical science nor psychology can give any exhaustive description of man. Physical science has a wonderful description to give of his body; psychology has many interesting things to say about his mind, but there is an evasive secret about his inner life which they cannot get at. It is this inexhaustible depth in the human which goes down into the eternal life of God that makes religion inevitable and indestructible. Every sacred book might be burned and every temple razed to the ground, but religion could not be destroyed without destroying man himself. There have been endless controversies about the

origin of religion, but its real origin is in the Eternal Spirit working within the human spirit.<sup>5</sup>

If it may be truly said that the Hebrew's religion was built upon the broad foundation of universal fellowship with God, it may also be claimed that Christianity rests upon native capacities, impulses, and desires of humanity, and that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of all religion—not only that which appeared in Israel as the immediate background of Christianity, but also that which appeared among all other peoples, especially in the Græco-Roman world. Dr. James W. Lee finds that there is no radical difference between the power that had raised the race from savage levels and the power of the gospel which leads to eternal salvation. He says:

To find the meaning of Christianity, therefore, it is not necessary to look outside the confines of human life. Christ introduced and acted in accordance with no principle foreign to man. He really identified himself with the very principle man had followed in reaching whatever level of healthy life he had already attained at the time of Christ's appearance in history. Christ gave himself wholly to that law of suffering love which from the beginning had been the principle of human progress.<sup>6</sup>

The comparative study of religions during the last half century has done much toward bringing religion back into the world of thought as the chief interest of mankind. As the religions of Egypt, Babylon, Persia, and other ancient nations have been carefully studied, men have discovered that there is great and precious truth in the midst of much error in all these religions.

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<sup>5</sup> Religious Foundations," p. 40. Macmillan.

<sup>6</sup> "The Religion of Science," p. 283. Revell.

In Egypt, for instance, there was a hymn of divine providence containing the words:

O how goodly are thy designs, O Lord,  
That there is a Nile in the sky for strangers  
And for the cattle of every land. . . .  
Thou art he who art my soul;  
Thou art the life of life; through thee men live!

There have come down from Babylon penitential psalms not unlike those chanted in the sacred temple in Jerusalem. Lewis Browne quotes one of them:

The sin which I sinned I knew not;  
My God has visited me in wrath.  
I sought help, but none took my hand;  
I wept, but none gave ear.  
To my God, the merciful God, I turn and pray;  
How long, O Lord! . . .  
O God, cast not away thy servant,  
But turn my sin into a blessing.  
May the wind carry away my transgressions.  
Seven times seven are they—  
Forgive thou them! . . .

In Persia Zoroaster presented the contrast between good and evil and urged all men to throw themselves into the struggle on the side of the good God, as earnestly as Moses, Joshua, or Elijah called the people to serve Jehovah. God was on the side of order, righteousness, health, and immortality; over against him was Satan with his deception; and every man was compelled to choose his side—whether with God and goodness, purity, and light, or with Satan and evil, filth, and darkness. These views passed over into Judaism from Persia, and the Satan of the Jews at the time of the beginning of Christianity was of Persian rather than of Hebrew origin,

The mystery religions took root and spread rapidly throughout the Roman Empire because there was everywhere a deep craving for personal salvation. Christianity did not make its way in the face of an indifferent world. Many people were deeply convicted of sin and were asking, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul could say truthfully, "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are very religious," and he could take "the unknown God" as a point of departure for telling his hearers of the God who had revealed himself in Jesus Christ.

Since the results of a careful and systematic study of all the world's religions have been presented, it is no longer a question of true and false religions, or of the true Church and false sects. No religion is wholly false, or wholly true. Some may have only a small grain of truth with vast quantities of error, while one may be spoken of in a peculiar sense as the true religion, and yet even Christianity as represented by the various denominations cannot be true in those points in which the denominations contradict one another. There is obviously in even the best interpretation of Christianity some admixture of error, and very few men would claim that every expression in their denominational standards is absolutely true. If all religions were false except the one true religion, the very fact that there is so much in common in all of them would raise a doubt concerning the truthfulness of any of them. The conclusion to be drawn from a comparative study of religions is not that all are merely human products, but rather that none are merely human. The old Quaker in "John Halifax, Gentleman" was tolerant toward all creeds, not because all were equally worthless, but because he

found in all of them some good. It was not the tolerance of indifference, but of respect.

Fifty years have passed by since Cardinal Gibbons wrote, "And lest we should be mistaken in distinguishing between the true Church and false sects, which our Lord predicted would arise, he was pleased to stamp upon his Church certain shining marks, by which every sincere inquirer could easily recognize her as his only Spouse." An impartial study of any branch of the Church in comparison with other branches stamps such a statement as pure theory unsupported by history. To-day a writer would hardly venture to draw an absolute contrast between Christianity and some other religions, to say nothing of the contrast between Roman Catholicism and the Churches of Protestantism, and Canon Streeter is true to the genius of Christianity, as seen in its Founder, when he says:

"Enviest thou for my sake?" said Moses to one who told him that there were some beside himself who prophesied. "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets!" That surely is the spirit in which Christ would have us approach other religious leaders of mankind. In Mohammed's zeal for the One God we should note the spirit and power (as well as some of the limitations) of an Elijah; in the concentration of a Confucius on a code of noble conduct we should approve another Moses—and it was to fulfill, not to destroy, the law and the prophets that Christ came. In the unnamed author of the *Gita*, the flower of Hindu devotion, we may see one who had chosen that better part for which once He commended Mary. And in the Buddha we must salute him who, giving first place to love both in word and deed, might have reached the summit of inspiration but for that "nay-saying" which deems life itself an evil.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> "Reality," p. 47. Macmillan.



Again, the same writer compares and contrasts the best thought of Greece and of India with Christianity and indicates the contribution that each has made:

Greece saw the vision of Cosmos, the order, beauty, law, behind phenomena; the Universe is the expression of Mind. India conceived the Dance of Shiva—Shiva, with the Sun and Moon as eyes and the Ganges spurting from his helm, dancing exultant in the flames; the Universe is the expression of Zest. India was right; Greece, too, was right. But it was a deeper insight, not merely a sublimer dream, that dared to say the Universe is the expression of Love; that could see the inmost mystery of Creative Power unveiled in the figure of a man hanging on a cross for the sake of an ideal.<sup>8</sup>

And yet there are religions and religions. This comparative study has shown that while in some respects all religions are alike, in many important features there is a vast difference between them. Religion is not always good. It sometimes becomes positively harmful, and even the best of religions is sometimes made the occasion and excuse for wrong. After Le Roy has said many appreciative things concerning the religion of the native African, he rather bitterly remarks: "As in other countries, in the name of liberty, fraternity, and progress, good, simple people are ruined, thrown into prison, pursued, hunted, or killed; so in Africa, in the belief that justice requires it, false sorcerers are poisoned, the piles of ebony are lighted under criminals who are such by name only, and thousands of innocent heads are cut off."

In "Religion in the Making," A. N. Whitehead points out the necessity for criticism in religion. He says:

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<sup>8</sup> "Reality," p. 174. Macmillan.

Indeed, history, down to the present day, is a melancholy record of the horrors which can attend religion: human sacrifice, and in particular the slaughter of children, cannibalism, sensual orgies, abject superstition, hatred as between races, the maintenance of degrading customs, hysteria, bigotry can all be laid to its charge. Religion is the last refuge of human savagery.<sup>9</sup>

With the facts laid bare through wide observation, it is hardly necessary to call attention to the inadequacy of some religions. A certain quality is required to make them beneficial. There is a vast deal of religion in Africa, for the savage is persistently and ostentatiously religious, but it does not save the people from themselves or from the calamities that lurk in their environment. The quality of faith necessary to move the people along an ascending scale of life is lacking, and in spite of religion—and to some extent on account of it—the savage passes his days in wretchedness. Le Roy paints this dismal picture of African life:

The women are afraid of their husbands, the husbands of their wives; the children have no assurances as to the intentions of their parents, nor the parents of those of their children; the village chief doubts his people; and the entire community, which ought to live, eat, and work together, lives, eats, and works in secret, constant, and reciprocal mistrust. This general suspicion, founded on reasons only too well justified, is the principal cause of the scattering of African society into tiny villages, the dispersion of all this poor world, the cause of its weakness in the presence of invaders and slave-traders, of its powerlessness to rise, of its halt in the march of civilization. Moreover, this distress generates a strange jealousy that strengthens still more the tyranny from which these primitive societies suffer. No one can rise, become rich, do anything new that distinguishes him from the common rank

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<sup>9</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 32. Macmillan.

and file without arousing envy and its consequences. A somewhat better constructed house, a better planted field, clothes more carefully made attract attention, for they indicate an ambitious man; the only means by which this man of progress may maintain himself is to make himself feared. Only the fear of his fetishes will keep the curious on their guard; otherwise he is a lost man. Thus an equality in misery and barbarity has been maintained in Africa during the ages.<sup>10</sup>

The marvel of the ancient world is the Hebrew religion. When the Old Testament is compared with the New and with the enlightenment of modern times, some parts of it may seem crude and even immoral, but when it is compared with other ancient books and its practices are placed side by side with the religious customs of other nations, its moral grandeur shines as the stars in the firmament. David Houston brings his excellent study of "The Achievement of Israel" to a close with this appreciative intimation of the contribution of that nation to religion:

Israel became the pioneers of the nations in things pertaining to the spirit. They cleared the forests and cut pathways through the wastes, across the marshes, and up the hillsides. And as no one knows what a road is save him who has made it, so no one can know what toil and agony of soul the Ten Commandments stand for save he who has experienced in himself, or in a race, redemption up from superstition and idolatry, up from fear and rage, from covetousness, lust, and murder. Through all that Israel passed, till they gained the heights and the clear far-extending horizons, and lit a lamp there to guide their brethren, and built a city there where men might dwell in safety, as they passed forward on their way—

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<sup>10</sup> "The Religion of the Primitives." By Monsignor A. Le Roy. Macmillan.

true knights of God, rescuing humanity from the wild beast, from the crag, and from the fen.<sup>11</sup>

Undoubtedly Israel was an elect nation—a people chosen of God to receive a revelation for all the world. The mistake that it made was to think that it was the only people that God cared to save, that it was the only elect people, and not merely the most highly favored among many for the final benefit of all; that it was elected for destiny and not for service. In spite of the fact that the nation was wrecked upon this erroneous and prideful notion of election, that view has persisted and recurred over and over again. Many still believe that God has an elect people upon whom he showers temporal and eternal favors, while countless thousands are regarded as outlanders who were never intended to share the comforts and delights of the Father's house. But God is not a Jew, or a Presbyterian—at least of the exclusive type. His loving-kindness and tender mercy are over all his works, and his saving presence has been dimly felt wherever men have struggled and aspired. In his book on "Liberalizing Liberal Judaism" James Waterman Wise has a chapter on "The Mission of Israel" in which he says: "Instead of believing that Israel has a mission as guide and leader in the achievement of the great ideals of civilization, a far finer and nobler conception will arise. Israel's task will be thought of as fitting *itself* to take its place, not before, but *among*, the other peoples of the world, not as guide, but as comrade, not as having priority over other peoples, even in the field of service, but as peer and equal having a work to do, not superior or greater,

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<sup>11</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 255. The Pilgrim Press.

though in some respects, perhaps, distinct and different from the rest."<sup>12</sup>

It is no longer the fashion anywhere to speak of religion as an invention of priests, fostered by kings to keep order, or of sacred books produced by fraud to deceive the unsophisticated masses. The requirements of religion are not imposed by the few upon the many, or even by an alien power from the outside. They come through the operation of a force which wells up from the bosom of humanity.

Nor do many psychologists now think of religion as an illusion apart from actual life, or as a product of a superheated imagination. It is too nearly universal for that. While many devoted men have wandered off into extravagances, on the whole the great creative personalities in religion have been the most practical leaders in history. Origins are still obscure and investigators put forward their theories with diffidence, but no one now supposes that it is so simple a matter as it appeared to the scientists of the nineteenth century. The science of religion has made utterly untenable any of the views referred to by Dr. Lee when he says:

Mr. Spencer and Professor Huxley taught that religion owes its existence to ghosts seen in the dreams of savages. Others see in magic and necromancy and superstition the origin of religion. They make of it a disease instead of a legitimate product of the human spirit. They make of it no wholesome reality flowing out from the fundamental relations of finite man to the infinite God, but an abnormal secretion of the human brain to be thrown off at a higher stage of culture and mental health.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Op. cit.* Macmillan.

<sup>13</sup> "The Religion of Science," p. 64. Revell.

No doubt there was some ground for such views, and that the scientific study of religion should pass through this stage is no more than was to be expected. But that stage has already been left far behind even among psychologists who do not yet concede that religion is all that its leaders have claimed it to be. The reason for supposing that religion could be identified with illusion and placed among the fleeting fancies that a mature civilization must outgrow is indicated by Dr. Wieman:

This mergence with religion of all branches of culture when at the level of crude immaturity has brought religion into disrepute. All the vagaries of that pre-scientific groping, with its superstitions, its myths, its blunders, is accredited to religion. In a sense it was religion, but it was religion mothering science. These blunderings and gropings and superstitions were just as truly rudimentary science as they were religion. They arose because of man's efforts to find the truth. We are not saying that all the myths, illusions, etc., arose out of efforts to seek the truth. We are only saying that that was one motive which has always to some degree, and however sporadically, actuated the doings and dreamings of men. And the working of this motive, in so far as it did work, was rudimentary science or that out of which science developed. But until recent times it was so merged with religion as to be indistinguishable therefrom. This groping has been called science only since it has so defined its field and perfected its methods as to command respect. In other words, the disreputable pre-scientific groping of men after truth has been identified with religion, while the highly respectable and efficient stage of this groping is called science. Such has always been the fate of motherhood—to be identified with the unlovely embryo and the mewling and squalling infant. What has been said of science is true also of art, industry, politics, etc. As soon as these interests become efficient, sufficiently mature to have a technique that would enable them to perform works that could command respect, they become dis-

tinguished and separate from religion. Thus religion becomes identified with the crude, the unlovely, the wild guesses and illusions of human beings.<sup>14</sup>

Religion is not a realm of pleasing fancy into which people take their flight from the disagreeable realities of the practical world. It is not an excuse for being occupied with imaginary glories of a hypothetical heaven instead of devoting effort to improve the conditions of the world in which people actually live. Sociologists no longer rudely call to men of religion to come out of dreamland and lend a hand in the task of human betterment. They now see that the only hope for the future of society lies in religion.

Religion is not now regarded as a hindrance to progress, or as impedimenta that must be left behind before the race can go forward. Psychologists think of it as so thoroughly native to humanity that it cannot be rooted out without paralyzing the whole social organism. Religion is useful. "O, yes," some say, "religion is a good thing; it serves the individual and society; it conserves real values." Therefore it is best not to try to get rid of it or to explain it away, but to ascertain its laws in order that it may become more useful. Consequently the psychology of religion has become an inviting field for the specialist, and many of the most noted men of the day are engaged in it.

Religion is thus recognized as subjectively real. It is as real as humanity. It is as impossible to think of man apart from worship as it is to think of him as apart from love of the family. It is not an accident

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<sup>14</sup> "Religious Experience and Scientific Method," p. 353. By Henry Nelson Wieman. Macmillan.

that all people have had their religions. Religion is the mother of civilization. It introduced the principle of moral obligation and opened the way from impulsive action to action through deliberate choice. It imposed restraints which required moral action leading to the development of character.

Without doubt religion is subjectively real—it is part and parcel of the life of the race. The question with psychologists now is whether it is also objectively real; whether it reaches further and establishes connections with the whole of reality. Religion is certainly human; is it also superhuman? Has it objective reality? Man is a worshipping animal. Is his devotion only a matter of psychology, or is there something at the upper end to respond? This is the question now uppermost in the minds of psychologists. Some have confidently answered it in the negative. Louis De Launay, in "A Modern Plea for Christianity," says: "To-day so many men consider themselves as physico-chemical phenomena and so confidently limit even the world of thought to the domain of their senses, that we are obliged to go back to the beginning and climb once more the steep ascent of the mountain from whose height we may see heaven and God." Psychology may not be able to answer the question at all. It may decide that questions of objective reality lie beyond its jurisdiction and should be turned over to philosophy or theology for solution. Certainly it cannot answer in the negative. If it cannot affirm that world with which religion is in contact, it must keep silent.

The great question for religion, then, is, Do men have contact with God? They have certainly



thought they had. The great leaders of religion have been uncompromising realists. They have craved the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; and if they had been convinced that their religion was only subjective, they would have repudiated the whole business as deceptive unreality. Wieman truly says:

Religion claims to deal with fact, with objects of immediate experience, just as much as science, just as much as engineering or farming or any other of the major concerns of human life by which men live. The earnest upholders and propagators of religion, in our time and in all time, have claimed to deal with that which shattered false dreams and thrust itself into human affairs with all the inevitableness and unyieldingness of ultimate fact. And if it could have been proven to these earnest upholders and propagators that religion really did lie beyond the reach of experimental testing and immediate experience, they would have had nothing of it. They have been men and women who craved exposure to fact and first-hand experience of that which is truly existent.<sup>15</sup>

The mighty men of faith in all lands and times have addressed their minds and energies to the total situation. They have endeavored to apprehend reality and to give their near-sighted brethren a glimpse of real though hidden powers. To their minds the decisive and compelling factor in the total situation was God. They no more doubted that they stood face to face with a superhuman and responsive power than that they looked out upon nature and into the faces of their fellow men; and without this conviction their religion would have been as unreal as the baseless fabric of a dream. The certainty of God

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<sup>15</sup> "Religious Experience and Scientific Method," p. 315, Macmillan.

has been so completely interwoven with all religion in the past that it cannot be taken out without destroying the whole texture and making religion entirely different from what it has always been supposed to be. This conviction has been more fruitful in the enrichment of experience and knowledge than any other that humanity has held, and the destruction of it would plunge the whole race into a sea of doubt so vast and deep that knowledge of any kind would seem to be forever impossible. The significance of the reality of God for humanity is thus convincingly presented by Bishop Gore:

What cannot be denied is that man, as he presents himself on the broad surface of history, just as he has believed himself intuitively to be face to face with a real nature, and face to face with men like himself, so has believed himself to be in contact with higher powers, and has applied his mind, as his mental experience developed, to rationalize and moralize his religious beliefs, without losing them; and when religion has seemed to be under a cloud and men have sought to eliminate it, as something which ought not to count in a practical world, it has constantly revived in fresh power and triumphed over its enemies; and faith in God—in all its various forms—acting on the intuition of God's reality, has accumulated, through the influence of prophets and priests and through the witness of innumerable individuals, a body of experience so vast as to make it impossible to deny that man is in real contact with God, really dealing with and being dealt with by God, without at the same time denying the validity of all human experience and opening the doors wide to a thorough-going skepticism, such as would paralyze not only man's religious activity, but his moral, social, and scientific activity as well.<sup>16</sup>

Prophets, apostles, and saints were certainly not

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<sup>16</sup> "Can We Then Believe?" p. 370. By Charles Gore. Scribner's.

dealing with mere thoughts and emotions. They were dealing with God. They were not students of psychic phenomena, interested in the occult, and given to analyzing and explaining the religious processes of the mind. They were overwhelmed with a sense of the divine presence and burdened with a message of righteousness which came from above. Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up. Jeremiah declared that the Lord called him and enticed him. Paul asseverates that he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. The overpowering and compelling reality was God, beside whom the nations were but dust in the balance; and because these men were mastered by God they were able to rise above the world and master it for God.

Suppose they were deluded. Then everything is real except the Great Reality. The world to which men react is real, they themselves as they interact are real, but the divine that presses upon them and calls for response is not. "Then Abraham and Moses and Isaiah," says Dr. Lee, "acted upon their intuitions as if they represented a real Jehovah, and believing they did, planted a people and enacted laws for its regulation, and adumbrated in prophecy its coming glory, but they were misled by false appearances. The world that stood over against the flesh was real and did match man's low desire, while the divine world that stood over against his spirit was a phantom and could not answer to his religious hopes." Dr. Lee goes on further to show the absurdity of this supposition:

If a man continues to talk into one end of the telephone and to get answers back, when there is no one at the other end of it, a jury is called to inquire into the state of his mind. Now, if

for thousands of years the human race has been perceiving God in nature, in conscience, in history, and answering back in prayer and reverence and song and liturgy and doctrine and temple, when, in fact, no God has been perceived, then it is evident that human nature is constitutionally deranged. It is remarkable, however, that man should find himself led astray at none of the gateways through which he holds commerce with outside reality except the religious. The gateway of vision opens out directly into the kingdom of light. The gateway of sound exactly adjoins the kingdom of melody. The intellect borders on the realm of truth. The universe fits closely about and meets and matches every human sense, except the religious. If man would breathe, there is the air; if he would satisfy his hunger, there is the food; if he would slake his thirst, there is the water; if he would talk, there are vibrations to carry his words. Every door of the soul and body is an open port through which there is constant exchange of inside and outside merchandise except the one opening into the religious regions.<sup>17</sup>

If it should be discovered that people have been wrong in believing that they have been having communion with a divine reality, then it would be good-by to religion. If the only benefits of religion are the indirect advantages of personal and social improvement, people will not continue to seek by indirection what may be arrived at directly. According to Lamb's quaint essay, when roast pig was discovered through an accidental fire, Chinamen continued to burn down their houses in order to obtain the delicacy until some one found out that it was not necessary to burn down a house in order to roast a pig. When a lady at a health resort was instructing William, the circuit rider, in the mysteries of the Yogi psychology, he indignantly exclaimed, "Madam, I don't have to

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<sup>17</sup> "The Religion of Science," p. 113. Revell.

pant like a lizard to know that I have an immortal soul!"

When religious people engage in prayer, they believe they are worshiping God, to whom they look for salvation. They are not merely taking spiritual exercise. It is not the exercise that saves, but God, and without external objective contact there is no salvation. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Religion is an experience of God, and the value of the experience depends upon the reality of its object. Peter would not be satisfied with a multiplication of experiences. He says: "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Religion, then, is contact with the supreme reality—God. That upon which all things depend and in which all things consist, however it may be conceived, is God. The very least that man can say of the divine is that it is the independent power upon which, as dependent beings, they must rely. Macintosh makes this the starting point for a reasonable theology. He says:

Schleiermacher began right when he suggested substituting for the so-called theistic proofs an appeal to the universal human consciousness of absolute dependence. We are all aware, in that immediate cognitive experience which we sometimes vaguely call "feeling," that we are absolutely dependent, and in this consciousness is included an immediate apprehension of God. In recognizing our absolute dependence there is included a recognition of a Reality upon which we are absolutely dependent, and that Reality, whether we can learn

anything more about it or not, is God, the God of universal experimental religion.<sup>18</sup>

Wieman is very emphatic in his contention that the object of religious devotion must be outside of humanity, a real objective power, and he indicates the way in which he arrives at the certainty of God. "The word God," he says, "taken with its very minimum meaning, is the name for that Something of supreme value. God may be much more than this, but he is certainly this by definition. In this sense, with this minimum meaning, God cannot be denied. His existence is absolutely certain. He is simply that which is supremely significant in all the universe for human living, however known or unknown he may be." "Religion," he says further, "is man's endeavor to find that adjustment to God which will yield most abundant life. For God is precisely that object, whatsoever its nature may be, which will yield maximum security and abundance to all human living, when right adjustment is made."

While Hickman is careful to keep psychology within its own bounds, he says that the psychologist is compelled to take account of man's belief in the Determiner of Destiny.<sup>19</sup> In fact, it would seem impossible for psychology to move at all without taking for granted the existence of the self, other selves, the world, and God. The stimuli to which the self reacts must be referred to an external world as their source, and it would seem that the universal

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<sup>18</sup> "The Reasonableness of Christianity," p. 74. By D. C. Macintosh. Scribner's.

<sup>19</sup> See "Introduction to the Psychology of Religion." By Frank S. Hickman. The Abingdon Press.

response to God is produced from stimuli from that source. It is as unreasonable to think of God as unreal as it is to think of the world as unreal. "For all his perceptions," writes Dr. Lee, "whether of the world, or of himself, or of God, man is limited to the objects which produced them. He could no more have religious perceptions without God than he could have self-perceptions without man, or sense-perceptions without a world. Spiritual intuitions are as indubitable evidences of the presence of God as sense intuitions are of the presence of the material world, or as self-intuitions are of the presence of man." Again he says:

Man had no idea of the world until nature stood before him and his mind reacted upon it and out of the impressions of it formed an idea of it. He had no idea of himself until out of self-perceptions he made one. He had no idea of God until he perceived God enswathing him and out of intuition of the divine made an idea of Him.<sup>20</sup>

The knowledge thus gained is verified and increased by action. "Taking, then, experience as real and objective," Percy Gardner writes, "we proceed to work outward in touch with it. From resistances of a physical kind we discover the facts and laws of the material world. From resistances of the human medium we discover the world of other selves, amid whom we learn to live in friendship or enmity. From inner and spiritual resistances we learn the nature of the spiritual world, in which God is supreme."<sup>21</sup>

There is a psychology of religion, and there is also

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<sup>20</sup> "The Religion of Science," p. 116. Revell.

<sup>21</sup> "The Practical Basis of Christian Belief," p. 23. By Percy Gardner.

an analogous psychology of patriotism. The psychologist can no more give an adequate account of the religious processes without objective reference to the God in whom men live and move and have their being than of the patriotic processes without reference to the state in which the patriot holds his citizenship. If it be contended that psychology is purely descriptive, and must therefore stop with a description of the processes of mental activity, then this science must admit its limitations and be supplemented by philosophy, or the effort to know will end in an intolerable solipsism, in which each individual will be certain of nothing except himself. But men have never been willing to rest in mere self-description. "The search for reality," says Gardner, "has in all ages been the great problem of philosophy, and the great thinkers have made the transit, some in one fashion and some in another; but in one way or another all have had to make it or else to be confined forever to the merely subjective in knowledge and to sterility and ineffectiveness in action."

Religion depends upon contacts outside of and above man for its life. There must be a response to the effort to commune with God, if that effort is to continue. If there were no answer to man's appeal to the divine, he would quit. In fact, he would have quit long ago. Let us face reality. The truth must be sought, obtained, and acknowledged at any price. Illusion may have a pedagogic value; but if there is no God, there is no value. It is useless to try to rise above reality. If the universe is indifferent to good, the puny race of man, doomed to live for a brief day upon a grain of sand, would try in vain to reduce a



little section of chaos to order and build up a kingdom of values. There is no hope unless values are conserved in God.

It is reasonable to suppose that communion with God is real. There are difficulties so obvious that they come instantly to mind. One may ask, for instance, why, if God speaks at all, he does not make himself clearly understood. But, however great the difficulties in the way of believing in the reality of fellowship between the human and the divine may be, it is preposterously absurd to suppose that the whole structure of religion has been built upon a basis of nothing.

Herbert Spencer made much of the correspondence between the organism and its environment. Over against appetite is food; sight meets with corresponding light; companionship answers to love; a reasoning mind discovers an orderly and intelligible world. Is not the correspondence between soul hunger and a satisfying God as truly a correspondence as any of these? Would it not be as reasonable to declare that the food which answers to the appetite of the body is unreal as to say that there is no God to correspond to the appetite of the soul? Elemental instincts and desires are never misleading. They need to be chastened, directed, and controlled, but they point toward real good. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."

What would we have to think of the universe, if all minor adjustments were successfully made and only the great adjustment failed? What a grand fiasco life would be if vegetable, insect, and animal, and even man on his animal side found in the universe a home, and only man in his higher nature sought in

vain for a God that did not exist and sighed for a rest that could never be found! The absurdity of such a thought is descanted upon by Dr. Lee:

The flock of wild geese from the Northern lakes have always found the South they felt in their blood was there. The beaver has always found the mud responsive to his tail and the wood of the tree no harder than his teeth could cut. But if the cognitions of man do not correspond to things, but are hallucinations, phantasmal forms of his own consciousness, then the bears and tigers and beavers and bees and ants and gnats have the advantage of him. Human beings, who have exalted themselves, as Haeckel says, into images of God, are the greatest fools and the only fools on earth. The universe puts a higher value on genuine flat-footed tigers, who find, as they roam on all fours, the jungles matching their every want and anticipating their every item of constitutional knowledge, than upon the so-called lords of creation, who have only climbed to the top of animated existence in their conceit. They are like a company of plain laborers imagining themselves to be King Georges, and instead of occupying thrones, as they think they do, they are perched upon stools in the different rooms of an insane asylum. It were better to be a good, healthy tiger in the tall cane of the swamps any time than to be a crazy, self-inflated, self-deceived descendant of Adam, running at large in the high places of existence. It were better to be a real ox, grazing in the meadows, than an unreal human biped, walking with his head full of delusions in a paradise of fools.<sup>22</sup>

Reality in religion grows upon reality in worship, and reality in worship depends upon the reality of the object of worship. Devotion may be sincere, but unless it establishes contact with the divine power, there is no voice, no fire. Religion includes much more than genuine emotion and honest action. It lifts the individual out of himself, raises him above the

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<sup>22</sup> "The Religion of Science," p. 125. Revell.

whole race of man, and places him in the kingdom of God. The psychologists deserve the gratitude of religion for clarifying its phenomena, and humanism has rendered a noble service in tempering the harshness of dogma by dwelling upon all that is fine and admirable in human nature, but nothing short of contact with the last reality can settle a man in the eternal world and bring him to his destiny. The soul's *vis-à-vis* is God. Dean Sperry thinks that religion is scarcely worthy of the name until it settles the worshiper in God. He writes:

The religious consciousness, then, always involves consciousness of the self, but never of the self alone, always of the self in relationship to something else. The better we know ourselves, the less self-sufficient we become and the deeper our need and desire for this otherness of things. Religion is the quest for a Real Other and the transaction and communion between one's own self and that Other. We may doubt whether any experience deserves to be called religious, or any account of man's concerns merits the name religion, which does not spring from man's initial conviction of his own incompleteness and end in the confidence that he has found an Other who makes him whole. The hall mark of religion is this authentic stamp of completeness which the otherness in all things sets upon the separate and solitary self.<sup>23</sup>

If God is the supreme reality, the life of life, the power in every manifestation of power, the source of all being, the ever-present and all-pervading energy, then men must have contact with him. He is the one being with whom every person has to do. Some kind of intercourse with him is inevitable and unavoidable, for it may be literally said,

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<sup>23</sup> "Reality in Worship," p. 68. By Willard L. Sperry. Macmillan.

"Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet."

Because of the nearness of God, mysticism is universal. The extreme experience of the mystic may be discovered in a mild and modified form in the thoughts, feelings, and aspirations of every human being. Conscience, which is found everywhere in human consciousness, is an impulse toward the right, born of a pressure of the divine upon the human. It is that in every man which tells him that he ought to place himself upon the side of God. This vague sense of the divine presence, which is felt everywhere, reaches the highest expression in the utterance of the Hebrew psalmist: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."

Whitehead argues from the fact that some religions appear to have no God that a belief in the existence of God is arrived at only through inference. "There is," he says, "a large concurrence in the negative doctrine that this religious experience does not include any direct intuition of a definite person or individual." He places the universal element of religion in "a character of permanent rightness." He states that "Christian theology has, in the main,

adopted the position that there is no direct intuition of such an ultimate personal substratum of the world," and adds that this is the general doctrine of those traditional Churches which more especially claim the title of Catholic. Contrary doctrines, he says, have been officially condemned by the Roman Catholic Church. It is easy to understand why Roman Catholic theologians should take this position, for it is the only one consistent with the theory that the organized Church is the sole medium of revelation.

But while it cannot be claimed that a "direct vision" of God is universal, it is certain that contact between the human and the divine is. God is so close that we cannot but "sense" him. And while men cannot see, hear, or touch him, still they are sensitive to his presence. The five senses are not the only avenues of approach to consciousness. There is no longer doubt of the fact that in telepathy there is communication between persons too far apart for sight or hearing. Through the five senses science can approach the material world, and by this piecemeal method a knowledge of things is gained; but persons have contacts with each other which yield a knowledge over and above that which is gained through the senses. There is an undifferentiated experience of God—an experience which comes through an impression too subtle to be directed through the channels of sight, touch, and hearing.

The difficulty in recognizing the divine presence does not arise from God's remoteness, but rather from his nearness. A natural object can be held off

for the eye to look at; it can be touched with the hand. But God cannot be held at a distance for contemplation. We look before, and he is so close that we cannot visualize him; we look behind, and there is not a hair's breadth between him and the person who would see him. God is so great that he cannot be surrounded by vision or separated from things as a distinct object. A rock or a tree can be separated from surrounding objects and studied in isolation; but God is so great that he cannot be touched and handled or approached from the side. He is more like the ether, which is so constant, vast, and universal that no mental picture can be formed of it. We cannot see, touch, taste, hear, or smell the ether, and yet we know that it is the omnipresent medium through which the heavens are held together and our earth is acted upon by the remotest star.

Knowledge of things remote is gained by inference, but knowledge of things immediately present comes primarily through direct experience. An astronomer infers from the aberration of a planet that another heavenly body must be exerting an influence upon it, and by throwing the telescope over the field of probable location Neptune is discovered. The planet is too far away for contact, and a knowledge of it had to be arrived at through inference. On the other hand, air is discovered by breathing it and feeling it fan the cheek. In an analogous way, God is so close that the certainty of his presence is not a matter of inference, but of immediate experience. There is no more important question for theology and for practical religion than just this, whether men have an actual experience of God, or whether they must

rely solely upon what others have said concerning him. The issue is thus stated by H. N. Wieman in his illuminating book on "Religious Experience and Scientific Method":

Is our knowledge of God knowledge by acquaintance, or is it purely descriptive? Is God an object that enters into our immediate awareness, or is he only an object of speculation, known only through the logical consistency of propositions, which must be the form of all accurate knowledge, but known through a logical consistency which does not define any object entering our immediate awareness? Is he an object of possible experience, or is he purely a system of concepts? A great deal of religious thinking has interpreted God as a system of concepts, and that only. They have not necessarily denied that God was an object of possible immediate experience, although Kant did just that, because he was clear-headed enough to see that that was the inevitable outcome of his position. But many, not so clear in thought as he, have sometimes seemed to imply that a system of concepts could be experienced the same as a horse or a cow. But concepts cannot be experienced the same way as fire or earth. Can God be so experienced? Either God is an object of sensuous experience, or else he is purely a system of concepts and nothing more. All attempts to escape this dilemma must result in confusion and befuddlement, if not in actual superstition.<sup>24</sup>

Religion, then—real, vital religion—requires contact with God—with the supreme reality. It has arisen and flourished because God has had dealings with men, and men have had corresponding dealings with God. The question arises, What has been discovered concerning the nature of this Reality? What is God like? The most immediate and obvious answer is that God is certainly not inferior to the highest manifestations of his power. "He that

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<sup>24</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 27. Macmillan.

planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?" The tone of the psalmist's question implies that there can be but one answer. Was he wrong? Could religion be wrong in taking it for granted that the stream of expression had not risen above the fountain head of reality? Of course, it was possible to answer the question in the negative. In fact, men have so answered it. Some answered it negatively a long time ago, but naturalism fared no better in ancient than it is faring in modern times. Thales, Democritus, and Epicurus, forerunners of the philosophers of material science, said that the structure of eternal being was atomic, and even in Israel some could ask, "How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High?" But the religious consciousness has been so sure of a God who sees, knows, and cares that it has never been seriously disturbed by the negative answer.

The naturalism which had a vogue during the latter half of the nineteenth century is more erroneous and less satisfying than any other philosophy. The theory of the universe represented by it has less to sustain it than any other interpretation. It inferred from the mechanical aspect of nature that the universe was a vast machine—a machine like none that has ever existed; for no man ever yet saw an actual machine come into existence without a mechanic. Canon Streeter calls this theory *Mechanomorphism*. He says:

The universe is like nothing but itself; classification, which is the very basis of all ordinary knowledge, is here meaningless, for the thing to be studied can be classed with nothing else. The best we can do is to find the illuminating metaphor, the



picturesque analogy, the symbol or the myth, which will help us to apprehend some aspects of the truth. The Materialism of the last century I regard as a metaphor of this kind. It pictured the Universe as an Infinite Machine. A belief in God which ascribes to the Ultimate Reality qualities quite essentially human, like reason or love, is often decried as anthropomorphism, as an attempt to fashion the Infinite after man's own image. But if Theism is anthropomorphism, Materialism is mechanomorphism, an attempt to fashion the Infinite in the image of a machine.<sup>25</sup>

If the universe is a self-making, self-running, self-repairing, and self-perpetuating machine, it is unlike anything that man has ever known

An actual machine is a "going concern"; but it is that only because it was designed and is controlled by intelligence and purpose; leave out these, and it is nothing at all. If, then, you explain Nature—which is also a "going concern"—in terms of mechanism, while expressly excluding from the connotation of that word all reference to intelligence and purpose, you are explaining it in terms of something that never has existed and never could. Mechanism so conceived is pure symbol, it is simply a name for an abstract relation which has not corresponding to it any concrete object of which we have actual experience.<sup>26</sup>

Such a theory could not but have been short-lived, even if nature had turned out to be the system of material and tangible atoms that the scientist thought it was. The soul of man is too great to be held by iron necessity or crushed under the Moloch of mechanical law. Think of the picture of humanity wandering like an orphaned child, over the desolate wastes of a godless world!

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<sup>25</sup> "Reality," page 8. Macmillan. <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

Great God! I'd rather be  
A pagan suckled on a creed outworn;  
So might I, standing on the pleasant lea,  
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;  
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;  
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

But the scientists themselves have dealt the deathblow to naturalism. "Matter, for common sense," says Bertrand Russell, "is something which persists in time and moves in space. But for modern relativity-physics this view is no longer tenable. A piece of matter has become, not a persistent thing with varying states, but a system of interrelated events. The old solidity is gone, and with it the characteristics that, to the materialist, made matter seem more real than fleeting thoughts." No brooding Hamlet can now exclaim, "O that this too, too solid flesh would melt"—the scientists have resolved it into innumerable vortices of force.

Whitehead closes his book on "Religion in the Making" with a remarkable statement, in which he contemplates the passing not only of materialism, but of the material world itself:

The universe shows us two aspects: on one side it is physically wasting, on the other side it is spiritually ascending. It is thus passing with a slowness, inconceivable in our measures of time, to new creative conditions, amid which the physical world, as we at present know it, will be represented by a ripple barely to be distinguished from nonentity. The present type of order in the world has arisen from an unimaginable past, and it will find its grave in an unimaginable future. There remain the inexhaustible realm of abstract forms, and creativity, with its shifting character ever determined afresh by its own creatures, and God, upon whose wisdom all forms of order depend.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 160.

Now that the materialistic hypothesis has become a thing of the past, we can see that it never seriously threatened religion. The spectacle of the human mind deliberately setting out to establish a theory which would eliminate itself is absurd enough to guarantee the failure of the undertaking. It sometimes seems as if man were so sure of himself and God that he is willing to entertain any hypothesis and work to the end of any vein that presents itself as containing a possible solution. It is as if serious scientists said to themselves, "Let us 'play like' people, with all their precious possessions of religion, culture, and civilization, are but froth upon the atomic ocean and see how it will work out in verification." How could they take their work so seriously if they really believed that only atoms endure? But there are some men who persistently believe the least and hope for the worst, and even yet some scientists think that all is not lost. It is still possible to conceive of the universe as energy in which consciousness arrives and passes, while only the energy abides. It is these determined prophets of universal meaninglessness that Lord Balfour has in mind when he says:

After all, however, superstition may be negative as well as positive, and the excesses of unbelief may be as extravagant as those of belief. Doubtless the universe, as conceived by men more primitive than ourselves, was the obscure abode of strange deities. But what are we to say about a universe reduced without remainder to collections of electric charges radiating energy through a hypothetical ether? Thus to set limits to reality must always be the most hazardous of speculative adventures. To do so by eliminating the spiritual is not only hazardous, but absurd. For if we are directly aware of anything, it is of ourselves as personal agents; if anything

can be proved by direct experiment, it is that we can, in however small a measure, vary the "natural" distribution of matter and energy. We can certainly act on our environment, and as certainly our action can never be adequately explained in terms of entities which neither think, nor feel, nor purpose, nor know. It constitutes a spiritual invasion of the physical world: it is a miracle.<sup>28</sup>

No, the prophets are everlastingly right. Man did not come by chance, or through the blind operation of mechanical laws. The world in which man lives is not self-originating and self-sustaining. It could not have arisen out of chaos, and man could never have become a conscious being without consciousness from which to come. The world is fitted to the mind of man and man is fitted to his world because the same power that produced a consciousness with capacities for reasoning also produced an orderly environment in which it might develop. Dr. Lee thus imagines man in a world of unreason:

Try for a moment to get thought out of a mad world. Suppose all at once rocks should become light as feathers and feathers as heavy as lead; that the sea should become solid and the mountains liquid; that the sun should rise in the west and set in the south; that calves should turn into elephants during the night and horses take to the water as alligators; that oak trees should produce watermelons instead of acorns. What would be the result? The world would become an insane asylum filled with deranged people. It is the orderly, uniform, consecutive thought the Lord is constantly sending to us through the intelligible, rational universe that keeps us mentally balanced.<sup>29</sup>

But now that we have escaped from Mechano-

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<sup>28</sup> "Science, Religion, and Reality," p. 15. Edited by Joseph Needham. Macmillan.

<sup>29</sup> "The Religion of Science," p. 94. Revell.

morphism, we are threatened with Vitalism. Bergson has told us that the universe is alive. The vital impulse is continually shooting forth spontaneously, and the mechanical world is formed of burnt-out sparks as they fall backward. The real is the vital. "Largely through the influence of Bergson, the conception of the 'Life-Force' seems to be stepping into the place once occupied by scientific materialism in the popular semi-scientific thinking of to-day." No doubt there is a gain here. It is well to pass out of the region of the dead into the realm of the living. Life is a thing that exists in the universe, and it is better to think of the supreme power as all-pervading life than as "a wholly unconscious force comparable to an electric current."

But there are different forms of life—vegetable, animal, human—and it is as important to determine the kind of life through which the universe is to be interpreted as it is to determine that the interpretation is to be through life at all. Naturalism erred in taking the lowest manifestation as characteristic of final reality, and vitalism is making a similar mistake. Instead of thinking of God in terms of life in its fullest and richest manifestation in man, and especially in the best of men, it is disposed to take a lower or the lowest form of life as characteristic of the universe as a whole. If this tendency should prevail, the vital processes of nature would again be worshiped, and religion would repeat the extravagances and indecencies of the ancient Baal and Venus cults. Streeter warns against a repetition of this mistake:

The failure of Materialism was at least a magnificent failure; it sought to explain the universe as the expression of force in the simplest form known. To choose unconscious life, merely

because it seems at the moment to be the next more simple, would be to repeat that error—but in a less plausible and attractive way. For in what did the error of Materialism consist? It consisted precisely in the fact that it took for granted that the simple is necessarily the explanation of the complex, and the earlier of the later. It saw that the body was a machine conforming to the laws of physics and mechanics; it assumed that it was *only* a machine. It saw that life was a force; it assumed that it was *merely* force. To assume that, because consciousness is life, it is *merely* life is to repeat the fallacy.<sup>30</sup>

When life at its best is taken as an index to reality, the mind moves straight to a personal God. Life even in its lower forms contains the promise of the personal. The picture of life as a stream, or many streams, flowing steadily on leaves out the main characteristic, which is "self-organizing individuation." Even in its lowest form life is an organism which struggles to preserve itself as a whole, and in its highest form it is self-conscious person. "We are logically compelled," says Streeter, "to give the most serious consideration to the hypothesis that the Ultimate Reality is certainly no less (and, if that, probably far more) alive and fully conscious than the highest of its products of which we have any knowledge—the mind and heart of man."

In his effort to understand any living being, a man is compelled to interpret the actions of that being in the light of his own thoughts, motives, and emotions. The whole animal world would be a sealed book if birds and beasts did not act in such a way as to enable man to interpret their actions in terms of his own reactions, impulses, and desires. If God were wholly unlike man, any knowledge of him would be

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<sup>30</sup> "Reality," p. 123. Macmillan,

impossible. But religion is based upon the conviction that the human is akin to the divine, and it is therefore not only necessary, but altogether legitimate, to think of God in terms of man. Indeed, he cannot be thought of in any other way, and we are shut up to knowing God as he reveals himself in human life or not knowing him at all. Streeter puts it this way:

If I am to interpret any life other than human, I must, to however limited an extent and with whatever degree of qualification and hesitation, use my own inner experience as a key—that is, must “personify” it. If I affirm of a dog that it is affectionate, frightened, ill-tempered, or disappointed, I speak of the dog *as if it were a person*. But the personality that I thus ascribe to the dog must be understood to have, as it were, a large *minus* quantity appended. If I attribute such qualities to a rabbit, I am still implicitly ascribing to it personality, but with an increase in the appended *minus* quantity. But, instead of looking downward, I may look up; I may venture to use my own experience of the inner quality of life to interpret the quality of the Universal Life. Then I am ascribing personality to It; but in that case it is with a large *plus*.<sup>31</sup>

This book on “Reality,” by Canon Streeter, is one of the profoundest and most candid of recent years. In it the writer carefully threads his way through many facts and theories until he arrives at the solid conclusion that the last reality in the universe is none other than the God of the prophets, who is also the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In a great chapter on “God,” he confidently takes his stand upon what he calls the Higher Anthropomorphism.

For the last century and more, educated men—in acute reaction against the Anthropomorphic Deism of popular

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<sup>31</sup> “Reality,” p. 135. Macmillan.

Christianity—in speaking of the Ultimate Being have instinctively preferred to use words of an impersonal connotation, such as the Supreme Being, the Absolute, the All-Permeating, and Veiled Being, and the like. But in philosophy, as in politics, reaction against one extreme may easily result in another just as bad or, maybe, even worse. The category of personality is not only religiously the most inspiring that we can apply to the Power behind the universe; it is intellectually the least inadequate. In olden days a crude anthropomorphism was a danger to be feared; in our age what the philosopher wants is the courage to advance further, and to advance more confidently, toward what, abandoning all shamefacedness, I will style the Higher Anthropomorphism.<sup>32</sup>

Here he is not alone. He says that it was only after he had actually penned the first draft of this chapter that it flashed across his mind that of all the great religious teachers of the world Jesus Christ is the most unashamedly anthropomorphic. "The whole basis of Christ's practical religious teaching is just one great anthropomorphic thought. God is our Father, only he is as much better than the best as he is wiser than the wisest and stronger than the strongest human parents—let man believe this, and act accordingly." It is even so.

O Saul, it shall be

A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,  
Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever.

Communion with God is real. Religion declares that this is true, and philosophy confirms the declaration. God is not wholly known by any, but he is surely known by millions. The way to him is not long and tortuous. It is open alike to the philosopher and the laborer, the scholar and the little

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<sup>32</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 133.



child. His voice is heard by all who have attentive ears. To men who will not look for him God is nowhere; but to those who have eyes to see he is everywhere. It is as that sane and sensible mystic, Rufus M. Jones, says:

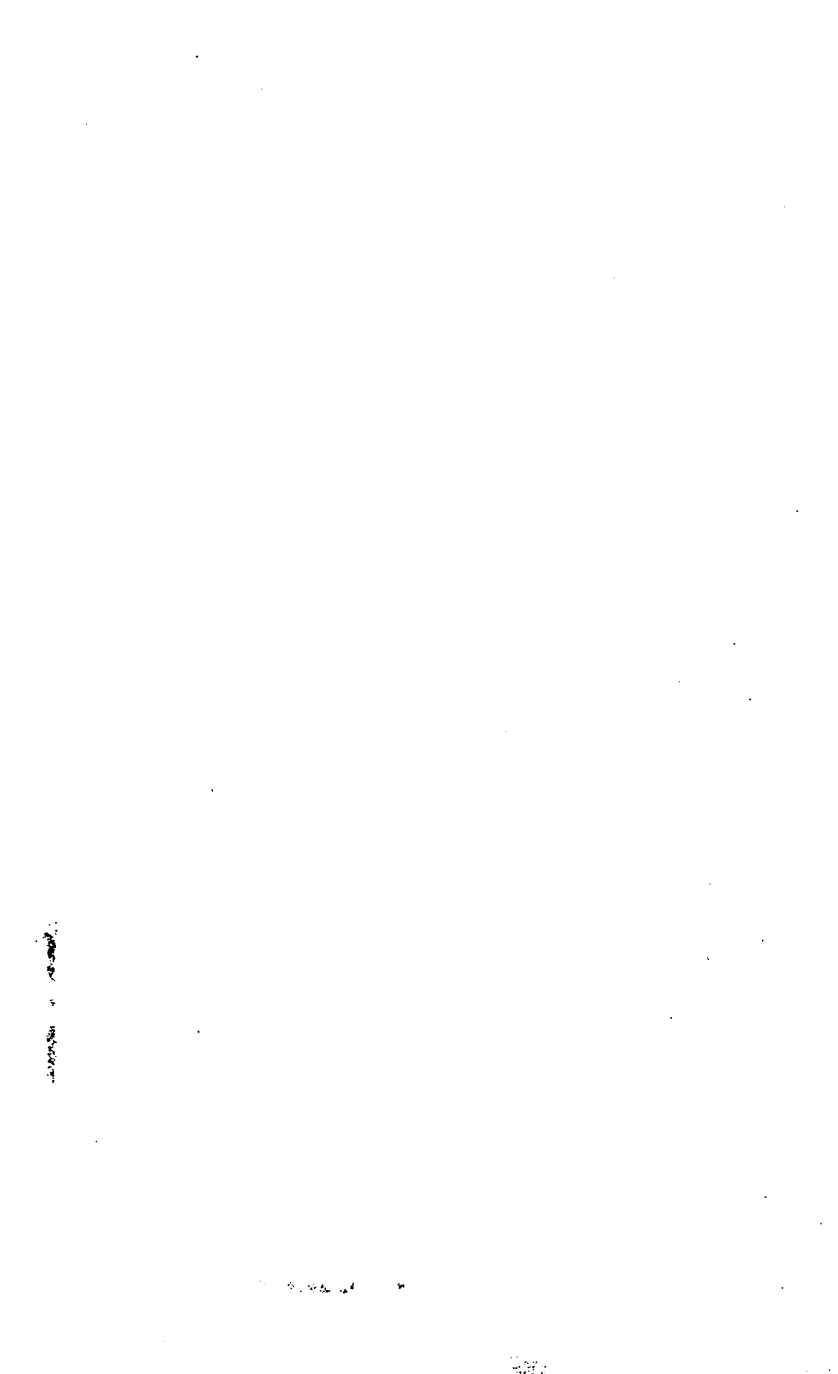
Some men live downward and focus their attention upon things that are seen and tangible. They hardly believe any testimony of man's spiritual nature. There are others, however, who live out beyond the fringes of the things they see and handle and are all the time aware of "intimation clear of wider scope." They care little for formal arguments to prove God's existence, for they no longer seek for a God on Olympus or above the sky or outside somewhere, working as an architect. God for them is the rational foundational ground of all that is real. We find him when we enjoy beauty. We prove him whenever we discover truth. We are with him and in him whenever we love with a love which rises above self and gives itself to another. He is there whenever we suffer and agonize over sin and wrong and dedicate our will to make righteousness and goodness triumph.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> "Religious Foundations," page 41. Macmillan

## **II**

# **SYMBOLS IN RELIGION**



## II

### SYMBOLS IN RELIGION

WE live in a real world. We are acted upon by powers other than ourselves, and we react to stimuli which reach us from the outside. We desire to know what it is that affects us. There is a continual effort to locate and define the objects from which impressions are made upon our consciousness. Consequently there has been developed a common language through which persons may communicate with one another and make the experiences of each known to all; and the desire to know definitely has also produced a scientific vocabulary, which differs from ordinary speech only in accuracy of statement based upon more careful observation.

We are aware of God. We have experience of him through immediate contact. Aristotle speaks of "the deathless energy of God." We know certainly that the whole universe is in continual action, and we cannot think of the essential Reality of it as quiescent and immobile. God can be known through the innumerable acts which he is always performing in the presence of every intelligent being.

This contact with God makes religion possible by opening the way for faith, hope, and love; and as soon as religion is born in the heart it begins to describe the object of faith, the content of hope, and the nature of love.

But the attempt to clothe the experience of God in intelligible language leads inevitably to the use of

figures of speech. All language is symbolic. A word, whether noun or verb, is a picture of an action or a thing. It cannot be other than figurative, because the experience which led to the effort to define cannot be absolutely separated from the totality of experience. We name things as if each object could be isolated from every other object and completely defined, but reality is one. God is not one with nature and man in the pantheistic sense, but he is so closely related to all things that nothing could exist apart from him. It is literally true that "no man liveth unto himself"—no thing exists to itself. The intellect is a device which separates the whole into objects for practical purposes, but it does not actually cut reality up into many separate and independent parts. It defines an ax, for instance, as an instrument to cut with, and for the purposes of living the iron and wood are regarded as distinct from the rest of reality; but the ax is still connected with a universe, which is a living whole.

That which comes nearest to achieving an independent existence is an organism, especially in the form of human personality. And yet no man can think of himself apart from wife, children, community, and God. Where can a fixed line be drawn between a mother and her child? What would personality be without the community in which it is developed? While it is true that the self is an end in itself, it could have no value apart from other selves, including God.

It is convenient to describe an act or motion, considering it for the time being as separate from the totality of action, and yet the motion of no part of

the universe is really marked off from the motion of the whole.

The vocabulary of religion is full of figures, suggested by an analogy between states of consciousness and the world of space and motion. We are "on the mountain top," or "down in the valley"; we are "making progress," or "losing ground"; we "look up into God's face" with hope, or "look down in despair"—the language of the inner world of faith is created by acquaintance with the world of sight and sense.

Any word says something—and leaves something unsaid. It is a picture of a real experience of fact, but no picture is ever just the thing pictured—no less and no more. To define a thing is to throw lines around it and mark it off from every other thing, and the difficulty that definition has to contend with lies in the fact that words are all elastic. Words do not mean the same thing to different persons; they do not even retain their meaning for the same person, but expand and contract with experience. We try to throw the line around an object and define it by telling what it is and what it is not. But we cannot shut it up in any language, because there remain points of contact with the whole of reality. The best we can do is to think of it as if it were really separate in order that we may get a better view of its relation to other objects and make more use of it in practical life.

Really, we cannot define anything; we cannot set limits that may be guaranteed to hold. "The flower in the crannied wall" seems to be a simple little thing, but if we could know it as it really is—in all its relations and antecedents—we would find in it

the whole mystery of being. All that God is, all that man is, may be surmised in that little flower. What is matter? Who can tell what it is and what it is not? Where is the definition of any material thing that can be considered final? All has not been said about any single thing. And if this is true of every common clod, how much more is it true of the whole! The universe cannot be defined. Men cannot pack God into a formula.

It is because the Bible is so rich in vital religion that it is so full of figures of speech. The prophets draw upon analogies from every realm of thought and observation to convey the impression of their experience of God. They cannot tell the half of what they know; the best they can do is to strike out a telling figure, as much as to say, "It is something like this." God is "a refuge," "a shadow of a great rock in a weary land," "a shelter in time of storm." The terrible arraignment of idolatry was in the interest of vital religious experience. The danger was not only because of the fact that any image is inadequate, but also because the image tends to cause the idea to become fixed and "set," making an expansion of knowledge impossible. Hickman remarks upon the fact that men have made for themselves images of the divine in every conceivable way, because they have always wanted to know what God is like and have tried to picture him to themselves and to others. He calls attention to the practice of the Jews as an example of the way in which religion can studiously avoid one kind of imagery, only to fall into another. The old Jewish religion would countenance no graven image, and yet its literature clothed God profusely

with verbal imagery. That is quite true, but there is a great difference between an idol and a vivid figure of speech. The idol is "set" as a material image, and presents the living God as a dead form, while the figure of speech is suggestive, elusive, and expansive. Jeroboam could point to the golden calves, saying, "These be thy gods," but a metaphor always leaves "more to be told."

It is significant that the Bible never attempts to say all that might be said. No single Biblical writer presents a systematic statement of revealed truth. There is a climax in the long process of progressive revelation, but there is no finished system. If the Bible had attempted to present the whole truth by definition, one more book would have been required in the canon—a book in which the writer would have put into systematic statement the truth which had been historically revealed. The book which is perhaps nearer a systematic presentation of Christianity than any other in the New Testament is Hebrews, and yet the most glowing and inspiring section of this marvelous letter is the eleventh chapter, in which the writer passes from definition to illustration. Faith is best known, not as it can be formally defined, but as it is seen in its effect upon the life and conduct of heroic examples.

The Bible speaks from faith to faith. Its great utterances take it for granted that the conscious fellowship with God which has become actual in the lives of the writers is possible for all others. A man born blind can never be told what red, or green, or blue is, but one born in possession of sight can be educated in all shades of color. The same faith that was necessary in writing the Bible is also required in



understanding it, and the men whose inspired utterances are recorded in its pages never ask their readers to take it on their word, except perhaps provisionally. "O taste and see that the Lord is good." In his famous life of Cromwell, Carlyle says that the soul of Cromwell answered across the centuries to the soul of David, "even as deep answereth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts." Prophets, psalmists, and apostles expected their declarations to find an echo in faithful hearts for all succeeding generations.

Of course, the desire of man to know his world as thoroughly as possible and to put his knowledge into orderly form could not but lead to definitions in the form of creeds and to the development of systematic theology. Theology is as wholesome as it is inevitable. Man's reason leads him to systematize his experience, and theology is nothing more or less than an attempt to put into intelligible and orderly form the truths that come through an experience of religion. But the older systems of theology were produced largely by great men who labored under two impressions which have turned out to be erroneous. They believed that a final system of theology was possible, and they believed also that all the Biblical writers spoke the same thing, so that all that was needed to produce the final system was to take the truth revealed in all parts of the Bible historically and arrange it systematically. When it was discovered that the writers of the Bible expressed varying views upon many subjects systematic theology fell into a subordinate place, and Biblical theology began to examine the book author by author to ascertain the views held by each particular writer,

Now that Biblical theology has made its contribution to the science, systematic theology is again coming to its place of first importance, and the indications are that we are upon the verge of an era of great theological construction. Indeed, the work has already been well begun. The use that is now being made of information gained through the various branches of science, such as astronomy, geology, psychology, biology, anthropology, and comparative religions, promises a richer and fuller systematic statement of the truths of religion than the world has hitherto known. Bishop Charles Gore, who gave up his diocese a few years ago in order to devote himself exclusively to study in theological reconstruction, says:

I do not doubt that traditional theology needs a great deal of revision in the light of modern knowledge—that, for example, the idea of the Bible as being on all subjects as “the infallible book,” and the idea that the stories in Genesis of the creation and fall of man are historical records, deeply as those ideas have entered into theology, have to be abandoned or very radically modified, together with a large part of the heritage of Calvinism; but also I cannot doubt that the extent of the necessary abandonment is being very grossly exaggerated, and that there is a real highway, or *via media*, between what the Americans call fundamentalism, or, as I should prefer to call it, blind conservatism, on the one side and radical modernism on the other.<sup>1</sup>

This vast influx of discovered facts has made a new study imperative, and the whole of systematic theology will have to be rewritten. However, two things need to be said. In the first place, the theology of the future will not differ radically from the

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<sup>1</sup> “Can We Then Believe?” p. 11. Scribner’s,

theology of the past, because God, human nature, Jesus Christ, and the experience of salvation will be essentially the same to coming generations that they were to the fathers. And in the second place, however well the theologians may do their work in the near future, the system which they produce will not be final. No systematization of truth can remain fixed, because living men are in contact with a living God in a living universe. The fathers wrought earnestly and successfully with the material in hand; the sons will toil as earnestly to incorporate the new knowledge into their theological work; but the sons of the sons will also face a new task, thrust upon them by another influx of knowledge. Experience will never be exhausted, and the work of systematization will have to be done again, and again, and again. Peter Taylor Forsyth, who placed as high an estimate upon the work of the theologian as any man in modern times, and did far more than most to rehabilitate a discipline that was falling into disfavor, wrote in his greatest book, the Yale Lectures for 1907:

Reduce the burden of belief we must. The old orthodoxy laid on men's believing power more than it could carry. That orthodoxy, that Protestant scholasticism, was in its way thorough. It went in its way as Ibsen's Brand did in his—it was all or nothing. It moved altogether if it moved at all. It attracted the all-or-nothing spirits, whose tendency was to move like a prairie fire, covering the whole area, but spreading only in one plane. It was comprehensive and acute rather than profound and subtle. It threatened to organize the faith clean out of belief. It seemed to sacrifice color to drawing and life to form. It had no atmosphere, no flexibility. And, great as it could be, it came at last to be more vast than great. It brought to men more to carry than power to carry

it. And like its predecessor, the medieval scholasticism, it was disintegrated by its own subtlety; it crumbled through its own acuteness; it died of its own insatiable dialectic and fell of its own thin and ambitious imperialism. This appeared conspicuously in regard to the claims made for the Bible as replacing the Church. "The whole Bible or none," it was said. "Take but a stone away, and the edifice subsides." This came of the Bible having been reduced to a fabric instead of an organism. And how many skeptics that course has made! And how many Pharisees! How many spiritual tragedies! If I were a secularist, I would not touch by assault the doctrine of plenary verbal inspiration and inerrancy. I would let it work freely as one of my best adjutants. But this all-or-nothingness applied also to the whole system of Protestant scholasticism. Dislodge but a pillar of the porch, and the house fell in. Lop a bough, and the tree died. Train a branch another way, and it pined. . . . The systems they built aimed at finality. Every part was of the same steel. The nuts and screws were of the eternal. *Nuance*, evolution was an unheard-of thing. So that when the end came it came for many as it has been immortally symbolized for us by the American spirit of comedy in Holmes's "One-Hoss Shay." That must be the end of every system which aims at being universal and final.<sup>2</sup>

Words, symbols, creeds, and confessions express experience of reality. They are necessary as means by which each man clarifies his own experience and makes it known to others. Creeds are not superfluous excrescences upon the life of faith. Religion cannot thrive without careful thought, and the very nature of the mind leads to an effort to think by definition and to put knowledge into systematic statement. The Church as a whole must formulate its truth, and every man whose religion is vital will have his beliefs. The individual may take over his belief bodily from

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<sup>2</sup> "Positive Preaching and Modern Mind," p. 124. A. C. Armstrong & Son.

some organization, or he may endeavor to work it out for himself, but belief he must have. Wieman says: "We may invent some new-fangled little belief of our own or accept a belief handed down from the greatest religious teachers of history, but some belief we must have if we are to get any meaning at all out of our experience, since no science is available."<sup>3</sup> He believes, however, that beliefs may be verified and that the great need of religion is accurate knowledge acquired through the aid of the scientific method.

Credo and confessions thus help to deepen and enlarge religious experience and to communicate it to others. "Progress in truth," says Whitehead, "truth of science and truth of religion, is mainly a progress in the framing of concepts, in discarding artificial abstractions, or partial metaphors, and in evolving notions which strike more deeply into the root of reality."<sup>4</sup> The clearer view of the religious genius is communicated to others through more appropriate symbols, which can be understood because they express a reality which underlies all religious experience.

Their expressiveness to others arises from the fact that they are interpretable in terms of the intuitions of the recipients. Apart from such interpretation, the modes of expression remain accidental, unrationalized happenings of mere sense-experience; but with such interpretation, the recipient extends his apprehension of the ordered universe by penetrating into the inward nature of the originator of the expression. There is then a community of intuition by reason of the sacrament of expression proffered by one and received by the other.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> "Religious Experience and Scientific Method," p. 299.

<sup>4</sup> "Religion in the Making," page 131. Macmillan.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132. Macmillan.

But we must keep in mind the fact that creeds do not express the whole truth. They do not exhaust the content of experience. The Biblical writers leave the reader gazing into impenetrable mysteries. Paul tortured language, resorted to many figures of speech, and drew upon the whole of Jewish, Greek, and Roman life in his effort to communicate his religious experience to others; and yet he exclaims, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Deissmann sees in the great apostle not so much a theologian endeavoring to define terms as a man with a great religious experience bursting forth in figurative and poetic expression in an effort to get others to see what religion really means to him and might mean to all others. He says that Paul is not trying to present a consistent theory of religion, but to express its reality and power. To know Jesus Christ is like coming out of captivity into liberty; it is like coming out of slavery into citizenship; it is like life from the dead. While Paul may justly be regarded as the greatest thinker in Christian history, he never intended to leave the impression that his controlling interest was intellectual. His object was not primarily to systematize the religious thought of the Church, but to make the world Christian. He spoke out of his experience to his fellow Christians and to other people, hoping to lead them into the riches which he himself saw and enjoyed. Consequently, as Forsyth said, if he was not always consistent, he was incandescent. Light and heat were there. We are just to Paul only when we study him as an example of the saving power of the gospel. Glover writes:

One of the reasons why Paul has been so inadequately studied of late years is that he was for long construed as a final authority, and his writings taken as a compendium of theology, while his own idea was that he was a learner. "Who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him?" he asks, quoting the Septuagint, and using "the Lord" to represent God; and he concludes, "but we have the mind of Christ." The passage is a vindication of the one right way of approach to God, as Luther saw and said with emphasis.<sup>6</sup>

The creeds are intended to inspire and not to repress. The great creed makers and theologians come to every man with the product of their earnest toil, saying, "We are helpers of your faith." While they attempt to define the objects of faith, they go beyond their province when they undertake to confine all others within their definitions. When they have expressed their faith in formal language, they must say, "This is what you *may* believe," and not, "This is what you *must* believe." If the time should ever come when the creed of the Church is finally fixed in the thought forms of the past and no individual is allowed to make any further contribution, the Church will cease to be the source of religious experience and become a dead institution over the grave of which might be written, "Here lies the Church of God done to death by dogma." Whitehead strikingly says:

Religions commit suicide when they find their inspirations in their dogmas. The inspiration of religion lies in the history of religion. By this I mean that it is to be found in the primary expressions of the intuitions of the finest types of religious lives. The sources of religious belief are always growing, though some supreme expressions may lie in the past. Records of these sources are not formulæ. They elicit in us intuitive response which pierces beyond dogma.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> "Paul of Tarsus," p. 109. By T. R. Glover. Doran.

<sup>7</sup> "Religion in the Making," page 144. Macmillan.

The early creeds were of inestimable value. They grew out of a life-and-death struggle with sensualism, with gnosticism, with asceticism, with docetism, and with innumerable theories and practices that would have extracted the meaning from Christianity and destroyed the reality of the revelation of the divine in Jesus Christ. They mark the channel of the richest and best religious experience of the time. Glover declares that Christianity conquered the mystery religions and all other forces in the Græco-Roman world, because it "out-lived them, out-died them, and out-thought them." The Church would never have been able to combat the error with which it was surrounded without defining its great doctrines. The Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian Creeds were the great symbols through which the Church established itself in the face of the philosophies current in the Roman Empire. The confessions which followed in the wake of the Reformation also rendered a necessary service. The newly formed Churches were compelled to place over against the Roman Catholic Church a systematic statement of their convictions. Percy Gardner has this to say of the use and misuse of creeds:

A creed, even if it is imperfect, even if some clauses in it are quite out of date, may serve a very useful purpose by giving each generation something to start from, some venerable historic formula, of which Christians will accept all they can. It will be a curb on the license of speculation and hold it within bounds. What is essential is that the creed should not be regarded as infallible, or as imposed by an authority which will not allow it to be discussed, but as a historic document, which represents and partakes of the inspiration



of a great age, but which in every successive age requires fresh comment and interpretation.<sup>8</sup>

Since symbols are so important that the Church must always have them, it is necessary to recognize their limitations and to keep them from turning into hindrances to the expression of faith. The abuse of creeds grew out of a deep distrust of God, other men, and coming generations. When creed makers undertook to make their own work final and binding, they said, in effect: "God has spoken once, or twice, yea, three times; but he may never speak again. Let us therefore secure the truth by building around it a wall so high that nothing can escape from it." The Jewish rabbis were regarded by their pupils as dispensers of precious truth, and the ideal student was one whose mind was like a vessel that was so tight that it would not "lose a single drop." The truth, as it has been wrought out in great creedal expression, does not need an artificial prop. Possession is nine points in the law, and the whole weight of conservatism, which is stronger in religion than in any other human interest, is on the side of those symbols which have received official sanction and endured throughout generations. It is more likely that the confessions of any Church will impede legitimate progress in religious thought than that they will be recklessly abandoned for new and untried forms. Dean Inge truly says:

The rudimentary science which may be discovered even among savages is not interesting or important to modern research, which discards obsolete hypotheses without scruple or sentiment. The case is very different with religion, if we

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<sup>8</sup> "The Practical Basis of Christian Belief," p. 197. By Percy Gardner. Scribner's.

allow the word to include myth, ritual, and magic, through which religion has maintained its position as a social force. Religion is a powerful antiseptic, which preserves mummified customs that have long outlasted their usefulness and otiose dogmas that have long lost their vitality. The history of customs and beliefs which have been put under the protection of religion is very instructive. It explains, as nothing else can, the vast quantity of mere survivals which encumber modern life. Even outside religious sanctions the race has contracted habits which seem to be hard to eradicate in proportion to the length of time during which they have existed. These habits have become, as the proverb says, second nature. Rapid changes are impossible; even slow changes are exceedingly difficult. Nature, or habit, reasserts itself, though it has been expelled with a pitchfork. Religions, in the same way, tend strongly to revert to type. Stolid resistance to innovations is a policy which often justifies itself.<sup>9</sup>

No one cause has retarded the free course of religion and hindered expression of religious experience more than the view which the Roman Catholic Church has taken of its own authority and the consequent use it has made of dogma. Since the Church is infallible, no official statement can ever be reversed, or revised, and every doctrinal decision remains binding to the end of time. No matter what other sources of knowledge may become available for larger and truer generalizations, the whole body of Catholic dogma must be regarded as absolutely true and final and reckoned with in every effort to state the truths of religion in terms of wider experience and knowledge. Hence Whitehead can say that while "religion is primarily individual, and the dogmas of religion are clarifying modes of expression," "the intolerant use of

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<sup>9</sup> "Science, Religion, and Reality," p. 349. Edited by Joseph Needham. Macmillan.

religious dogmas has practically destroyed their utility for a great, if not the greater, part of the civilized world." And while Roman Catholicism has been the great offender, Protestantism has not been guiltless in this respect. The reformers repeated the error of the tyrannical authority from which they had escaped by enforcing their official creeds upon their members through compulsion and upon the whole public through the use of the civil arm. "In Christian history," writes Whitehead, "the charge of idolatry has been bandied to and fro by rival theologians. Probably, if taken in its wide sense, it rests with equal truth on all the main Churches, Protestant and Catholic. Idolatry is the necessary product of static dogmas."

It is this long misuse of creeds and confessions by both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism that has made some modern Churches persistently avoid a definite statement of doctrine. Baptist churches the world over have suffered so much at the hands of creed makers that, with the exception of their doctrine of immersion, they have never adopted a formal creed, and the same thing may be said of the Christian denomination. The attitude of Methodism was admirably expressed by the venerable Bishop Alpheus W. Wilson at the Birmingham General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in 1906. Speaking to the proposition to invite all other branches to coöperate in preparing a brief statement of the beliefs and purposes of world-wide Methodism, he said:

I am afraid of putting these spiritual experiences into the frigid forms of a creed and creedal statements. Paul would not do it. "We have no dominion over your faith," he wrote

to the Corinthians; "we are helpers of your joy." The form of spiritual experience varies with the characteristics of each man, and you cannot put any statement of it in such shape that it will meet the requirements of all who have, or profess to have, faith in Jesus Christ our Lord. If you undertake to put your Christian experience in rigid form, in letters graven in stone instead of being written in the heart, you will inevitably offend some of God's choicest ones. You will come athwart some of the finest and subtlest experiences of our spiritual life. You will make many wonder if they have ever known Jesus Christ. You will start doubt and bring disaster where now there is the satisfaction of assured faith. I do not want anything of that kind; and when we touch that side of things, I would rather leave it to go out in God's Spirit than to put it down in bald letters on paper and print it out for the criticism of the critical ones of our theological schools.<sup>10</sup>

When creeds are regarded as final and enforced by compulsion they defeat their own end. The purpose of all symbols, statements, creeds, confessions, and systems of theology is certainly to establish the truths of religion in the thought of the world. But when the Church withdraws its statements from examination, upon the supposition that its doctrine is authoritative, infallible, and final, it brings theology as a science into disrepute and invites a cold neglect more damaging than violent opposition. There was a time when theology had the field, but it is now neglected even by many preachers, and the question is freely raised whether it is worth while to devote any time to the study of the great confessions, although religion holds its place in the world's life and the Church is still flourishing. For this decline in earnest consideration of its truth, the Church has itself, at least in part, to blame. When theology gives up its fictitious claim to rights that other branches of

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<sup>10</sup> "Sermons, Lectures, and Addresses." Cokesbury Press.

science do not possess and consents to base its conclusions upon experience, without resorting to any other means than the power of truth to penetrate the mind through its inherent reasonableness, it will come into its own again, for religion cannot but remain the chief interest of a race passing from time into eternity, and whatever helps to make religion more intelligible cannot but continue to be regarded as a chief aid in making life most worth living. How the present eclipse of theology has come about is indicated by Dr. Macintosh:

It is perhaps not surprising that, after all these defeats of theology on the territory of her neighbors, they should combine to deny her any standing-ground at all. Dogmatic theology, as "queen of the sciences," was a despotic monarch. She undertook to prescribe for all the others first principles and limits beyond which they must not presume to go. All went smoothly enough so long as the sciences—if such we may call their first crude beginning—were subservient. The rule of theology was a benevolent despotism. But as soon as the developing sciences began to show a spirit of independence and to appeal more fearlessly to experience for themselves theology began to rule them with a rod of iron; some of them, indeed, beginning to be openly insubordinate, she would have dashed in pieces, as a potter's vessel. But the sciences gathered strength and united to dethrone the tyrant, dogmatic theology, and by this time she has received at their hands double for all her sins. And yet their anger is not turned away, but their hand is stretched out still. Among the empirical sciences theology can find none so poor as to recognize her, much less do her reverence. Moreover, even the world at large, including hosts of persons who still think of themselves as religious, is coming to share in the contempt of the scientists for theology. What is the ultimate meaning of this development? Was Comte right after all, and is

theology destined soon to disappear before the steadily encroaching advance of the positive sciences? <sup>11</sup>

In every great outburst of spiritual power there is an element of knowledge which has its place and value. Then the period of fresh inspiration is followed by an era of scholasticism in which knowledge is given exaggerated importance and made the supreme thing; and this in turn is followed by a period in which knowledge is depreciated as of little worth. W. P. Paterson, in his Gifford Lectures on "The Nature of Religion," declares that modern Protestantism has on the whole been identified with the depreciation of religious knowledge, and he goes on to show why this is so and also why a change toward a higher appreciation must come about. This decline is no doubt serious; but the reasons for it are not far to seek, and the remedy lies near at hand. Dr. Paterson says:

It is a very serious fact that the knowledge of which the Christian Church is the custodian is so little esteemed as knowledge in the world of modern culture. It is still more serious that the Protestant Church has been increasingly identified with the view that knowledge is an excrescence of religion, and that if there be religious knowledge it is only knowledge of a sort. The waning self-confidence of modern theology is indeed intelligible and to some extent justifiable. It is the penalty which it pays for having been as confidently dogmatic about unimportant things which it did not know as about other things which were of vital importance and of which it could be absolutely sure. But it is a lesson of history that the life and power of the Church are dependent on its possession of knowledge about the greatest things, and on its being persuaded that it is real knowledge. A religion cannot

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<sup>11</sup> "Theology as an Empirical Science," p. 3. By D. C. Macintosh. Macmillan.

be expected to influence the world, or even to hold up its head in it, if it can only touch the feelings and advise people to be good and does not also teach a set of doctrines which make up a veritable religious philosophy that lights up the universe and gives definite answers to the persistent questions as to the nature of God, the relation of the world to God, and the chief end of man and the way of salvation.<sup>12</sup>

Much history and many grievances lie behind the deep resentment which now rises against the claim of organizations to the right to confine the expression of faith. In the face of the arrogant claims of theology, and all the pettifoggery that was made necessary in twisting texts and warping creedal statements on account of impossible theories of inspiration and sacrosanct ecclesiastical pronouncements, it is not to be wondered at that honest preachers lost their patience, and that scientists with their sincere devotion to straightforward use of language revolted against the theological hegemony and even denied systematic theology any place at all among the sciences. There is in the modern world a deep craving for reality, and people demand that the language of religion shall be a sincere expression of genuine religious experience. Not all the failure to listen respectfully to the message of the Church and to conform to its customs of worship is traceable to indifference to religion. The long effort of both Catholicism and Protestantism to reduce the religious life in England and other countries to a dead uniformity by compelling the whole population to assent to the creed and conform to the worship of the Established Church has produced a reaction in the opposite direction. Furthermore, as Hickman points out, the

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<sup>12</sup> "The Nature of Religion." By W. P. Paterson. Doran.

search for reality may lead some sincere and highly sensitive minds away from the æsthetic forms of worship. To the mind which feels deeply the iniquities of society the conventional service of worship may seem to be a mask for deep-seated hypocrisy. "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me." A man who is in downright earnest about truth and righteousness may find the repetition of ancient creeds an impertinence and feel the ritualism of a highly formal service to be a dead weight upon his religious consciousness.

The attempt of any Church to conserve a creed after it has ceased to be vital will prove to be in vain. When the religious experience of the world moves on beyond an ancient statement, it is useless to try to galvanize a dead form into life again. But the very effort to hold a creed beyond its day of usefulness may result in great harm. When people think freely about everything except religion, religious statements will surely become antiquated, and the Church will lose its influence over the world's life. Moreover, the strain of holding to views that are slipping from the grasp of the mind interferes with that mental activity which would lead to an augmentation of the content of faith. These words of Whitehead are ominous:

The modern world has lost God and is seeking him. The reason for the loss stretches far back in the history of Christianity. In respect to its doctrine of God the Church gradually returned to the Semitic concept, with the addition of the threefold personality. It is a concept which is clear, terrifying, and unprovable. It was also supported by the conservative instinct of society, and by a history and a



metaphysic both constructed expressly for that purpose. Moreover, to dissent was death.<sup>13</sup>

Whether he is correct in his explanation of the widespread religious uncertainty of our day may be open to question, but there can be no doubt that the last sentence is vastly significant, "Moreover, to dissent was death." In every other realm the human mind has been acting freely, and consequently great stores of scientific knowledge have been acquired, philosophy has made reasonable progress, and life has been wonderfully enriched upon the material and cultural side. But the time is not yet when men can freely form and express their view of religion, and so deep-seated is the feeling against changes in doctrinal statements that the very subject in some circles is *taboo*. This may be due in part to a natural intolerance, but not a little of it is the effect of the paralyzing hand of authority. Whitehead says, again:

A system of dogmas may be the ark within which the Church floats safely down the flood-tide of history. But the Church will perish unless it opens its window and lets out the dove to search for an olive branch. Sometimes even it will do well to disembark on Mount Ararat and build a new altar to the divine Spirit—an altar neither in Mount Gerizim nor yet at Jerusalem.<sup>14</sup>

When the whole Church, both Catholic and Protestant, accepts the view that creeds are good as mileposts and that they are suggestive rather than exhaustive, it will only be returning to a condition which prevailed in apostolic Christianity. In his

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<sup>13</sup> "Religion in the Making," p. 74. Macmillan.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145. Macmillan.

**Yale Lectures on "The Freedom of the Preacher,"** Dr. Merrill cites the Gospel of John as a magnificent illustration of the power of the reinterpretation of essential religion in terms to meet a new and urgent need. He says that we never should have had the fourth Gospel had not its author dared to restate the life of Christ in terms fitted to meet the new and prevalent philosophy of the time.

It was an appeal to what was then modern thought. Here was a world thinking in terms of the "Logos," while Christianity up to that time had been cast in terms of the "Messiah." What should be done? Cling to the Messianic terminology as divinely ordained and unchangeable, let what might happen to the world at large? Doubtless there were good souls of orthodox Jewish antecedents who insisted on the duty of talking the more in terms of Messianism, the less intelligible and real those terms became. They called it loyalty to the faith once delivered to the saints. But this great soul spoke out in terms of the thinking of his time, interpreting Jesus as the Eternal word, the Light of life, rather than as the fulfillment of racial dreams; changing the scene of his promised coming from the clouds of heaven to the spiritual life of the race.<sup>15</sup>

There need be no fear that the admission on the part of the Church that its creeds are elastic and subject to revision will lead to the sudden rejection of long-accepted statements and the hasty adoption of crude and radical novelties in religious thinking. The world is too prone to inertia to allow itself to be stampeded into new and dangerous ways, especially in religion. The road of the reformer is rocky enough without having artificial barriers placed in his way. The old will certainly remain until something better

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<sup>15</sup> "The Freedom of the Preacher." By W. P. Merrill. Macmillan.

has been found to put in its place. In fact, merely to know that every honest man is at liberty to express his mind upon any subject would remove the greater part of the objection that has been raised against creed. An acknowledgment of the fact that any statement of doctrine stands in its own strength, and not because of the protection afforded by a powerful ecclesiasticism, would greatly increase its value. Even after notions of infallibility and finality have been abandoned, changes in the symbolic expressions of religious faith will be brought about only through consecration and strenuous toil. Reforms are always slow, and the way of the reformer is hard. Streeter shows why this is necessarily so:

Progress always involves criticism of accepted ideas, usually also of the usages and the institutions in which they are embodied. Such criticism inevitably provokes opposition; especially where the change necessitated threatens the material interests, as well as the traditional prejudices, of powerful sections of the community. Hence the reformer, whether of ideas or of practice, has always to take the risk of being a martyr. His motives, like those of other men, are generally mixed; the desire for personal distinction, or for the furtherance of the sectional interests of the groups with which he is most closely identified, usually enters into, and thereby impairs, his disinterested perception of the right and his disinterested devotion to its attainment. But here again the greatness and permanence of the advance which he achieves depend mainly on the extent to which ideal and disinterested motives predominate in the minds of himself and those whom he leads. Just in so far as he is swayed by purely personal ambition, or the interests of a particular sect, class, or nation, he retards, instead of promoting, the advance of humanity.<sup>16</sup>

The effort to keep doctrinal statements fixed and

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<sup>16</sup> "Reality," p. 168. Macmillan.

inviolable through ecclesiastical and civil sanctions was put forth in the interest of truth. The truths of religion were considered so precious that they must not be exposed to the risk of being carelessly handled by the incompetent. But this course led to results exactly opposite to those desired. Instead of protecting religious truth and setting it firmly in the minds and consciences of the general public, it tended to withdraw religion from serious attention and place it among the lighter and more frivolous interests of society. Business men give themselves seriously to the development of industry and commerce and to the exploitation of the resources of nature, scientists earnestly explore the whole realm of natural phenomena and continually increase the store of fact and theory, but religion is associated with holidays and the less taxing occupations of life; and it has come about that the world thinks of the scientist as a devotee of truth, while ministers of religion are freely charged with insincerity, pretension, superficiality, and make-believe. This state of affairs is intolerable. Religious truth is superlatively important, because it is concerned with the highest interests of the race for time and eternity, and it must be brought back from the circumference and placed again in the center of the world's thought and action. But religion will not come into its own until the Church recognizes the right and responsibility of each generation in the interpretation of religious experience. When that time comes, conditions deplored by Dean Inge in the following paragraph will pass away:

It seems strange that a warning should be necessary to take our religion seriously. But we cannot look about us without noticing the extraordinary frivolity of much which passes for

religious interest. In Southern Europe, especially, religion is largely a social diversion, a spectacular performance, an artistic enjoyment. The attitude of our own public toward popular superstitions, half belief and half make-belief, is too common among churchgoers. The scientific man cannot understand this playfulness where matters of the highest moment are at stake. Nothing repels him more from the worship of the churches. It is difficult for a student of science to realize how weak the love of truth is in the majority and how widespread the mistrust of reason. The real skeptic does not write books on agnosticism; he never thinks at all, which is the only way to be perfectly orthodox.<sup>17</sup>

While the mind loves the definite and orderly statement of the great confessions, it rises up in indignation against the claim put forth by the advocates of any one of them that it contains the whole truth and nothing but the truth. All the mysteries of heaven and earth confined within the Thirty-Nine Articles! For an exhaustive and final explanation of God, man, and the universe, see the Westminster Confession! And yet every great historic symbol is worthy of respect. By claiming too much for creeds their supporters have shorn them of the power which they really possess and of the influence which they should exert. Doctrinal statements will come back into a place of prominence when they are valued for what they really are—earnest efforts of honest men to put the truth of religious experience into systematic form. The moment they appeal to authority for acceptance or demand that they be taken without the free exercise of reason, judgment, and conscience, they invite rejection. Any truth that claims immunity from examination puts itself beyond the pale of consideration. The greatest foe of religion is bigotry.

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<sup>17</sup> "Science, Religion, and Reality," p. 381. Macmillan.

Any Church that undertakes to prevent free inquiry and unhindered expression destroys its own usefulness and becomes an enemy to progress. In a recent volume of sermons Archdeacon Charles severely arraigns the spirit of intolerance and declares that unfettered thinking is the only way out of religious indifference.

If research is to arrive at truth, it must be free. But such freedom is constantly withheld. The Pharisees withheld it in ancient times and prescribed the Mosaic law as adequate and final. In modern times the Roman Church prescribes its infallible dogmas as ultimate and necessary to salvation, while in a somewhat lesser degree the Romanizing party in our own Church, and the ultra-evangelicals in all Churches, issue their indispensable terms of fellowship; nay, more, the most benighted members of these two opposing parties declare that these terms are essential to salvation itself. The Pharisees are strongly intrenched in all the Christian Churches of the present day. In our religious beliefs we have made tremendous strides in the last half-century. Some fifty years ago or more the bishops of our Church met in solemn conclave to pass a resolution that no candidate should be admitted to holy orders unless he professed his belief in the six days' account of creation. Happily, this unchristian attempt to fetter opinion was defeated, and to-day no bishop on the bench would himself accept the first chapters of Genesis as a document to be taken literally. Hence every attempt to fetter spiritual liberty and the work of research—and such attempts are being made and will be made—should be resisted and fought as an evil thing. Change is as inevitable in theological theories as in any other department of human life; where there is no progress there is stagnation and death. Our religious creeds and theories grow with our growing experience and knowledge. The more precisely, therefore, we define our doctrines in any single era, the sooner they will become outworn and obsolete; for precision and analogous intellectual distinctions, being based on inadequate experience, are temporary, while the truths they faintly seek to adumbrate

are eternal. St. Paul declares that in this world we can only see truths through a mirror darkly. In countries and Churches where partial expressions of the truth have been identified with the faith itself, the certainties of religion have often been rejected as outworn superstitions, and that just because they have been identified with their temporary and inadequate expression. If a Church identifies itself wholly with the past, it can only appeal to the unprogressive members in the nation—to the unthinking, the unreceptive, the mentally indolent, and the morally invertebrate. With forms and ceremonies ever growing more elaborate and more medieval, with appeals to sentiment and imagination, it may maintain its power over these stationary or reactionary elements of society, but the true life of the nation will pass beyond its control and will derive its moral sustenance and inspiration from other and living sources. Let us, therefore, be encouraged in these days of intellectual unrest. Even the most radical doubts and changes are often symptoms, not of decay and death, but of growth and life, and point to the removal of "those things that are shaken, . . . that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." The object of such unsettling is that we may be settled on surer foundations and find our refuge and our strength not in this or that theory of divine truth and righteousness, but in the present and living experience of God himself.<sup>18</sup>

Religion from its very nature as fellowship with God must be forever expansive and progressive. One of its great tasks is to bring the whole world up to its ideals of thinking and living; but another equally great is to revise and enlarge its own ideals through continual recourse to the living God. While the Church is Christianizing the world it is also Christianizing itself. The time has never been when the Church could say, "Now that the whole truth has been apprehended and stated, all that remains is to

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<sup>18</sup> "Adventures into the Unknown." By R. H. Charles. Scribner's,

spread it throughout the earth"; nor will it ever come. Wieman declares that a great danger lurks in the notion that the chief business of religion is to serve existing ideals. He says:

The age which thinks that the chief work of religion is to whip or lure men into fuller devotion to established ideals has forgotten the greatest of all religious injunctions, "Ye must be born again." It is because religion is independent of any and all conceived ideals that it provides the way by which men can transcend their limitations and rise beyond any and all conceived ideals to others that are more adequate to the demands of a changing human life. All our ideals, all our cherished values, are constructed out of our judgments, which always contain some error when applied to the vast, complex, concrete affairs of daily life. They not only fall short of the best; they have in them that error, that divergence from rectitude, which is the seed of death. That slight divergence, if too long continued, leads to death. They may be the best we have, excepting only God; but they are not God. Religious experience provides a way of salvation because it is a way up and out and beyond our ideals.<sup>19</sup>

But why dwell so long on the misuse of symbols, when the whole trend of the modern world is in the opposite direction? May we not take it for granted that the long night of oppression has yielded to the dawn of a brighter day, and that the future will be blessed with unbroken freedom in religion? There are reasons for it. In the first place, every dominant and successful organization tends to become tyrannical in the use of its power and to lose respect for the opinion of the individual and consideration for the rights of the minority, and therefore the tragic experiences of the past need to be recounted as a warn-

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<sup>19</sup> "Religious Experience and Scientific Method," p. 279. Macmillan.



ing. In the second place, there are great Churches which require subscription to creedal statements. It is as Percy Gardner says:

The organized Churches of Christendom have accepted creeds authoritatively set forth by Councils as expressions of eternal and objective truth; and they compel, at all events, those who take active service in them to subscribe to such creeds. And meantime the whole character of our intellectual surroundings has so completely changed that no one save a professed scholar, and even professed scholars very imperfectly, can understand what was in the minds of those who drew up creeds or what their clauses were intended to convey. The minds of the good Churchmen who, Sunday after Sunday, repeat these creeds are hopelessly out of touch with their original meaning.<sup>20</sup>

And there is another reason. There is at the present time a marked drift toward Roman Catholicism, and influential men in the Church of England and many other Protestant Churches are disposed to condone and excuse the claims and practices that became unbearable and made the Reformation inevitable. They join Cardinal Gibbons in the claim that the Church has always been divinely directed in all important matters and that the Inquisition owed its horrors to the severity of the civil government. The Church was really kindly and benevolent toward her erring children, but cruel kings went to extremes in exacting obedience to ecclesiastical law which was also the law of the land. It is claimed that persecution was characteristic of the times and that the Church should not be severely condemned for doing what was the order of the day. That is quite true;

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<sup>20</sup> "The Practical Basis of Christian Belief," p. 10. Scribner's.

and if the Roman Catholic Church could acknowledge its error and repent, as most of the Churches of Protestantism have, it would stand in a better light before the world. But that is just what its doctrines of authority, infallibility, and finality will not allow the Roman Catholic Church to do; and as long as that Church claims to be infallible in creed and polity, it will be necessary to keep fresh in mind the policy of persecution and repression which prevented religious liberty and hampered scientific investigation. Because of this claim of inerrancy, it is well to repeat and record over and over the sentence and enforced abjuration of Galileo, as a case in point and as an incident indicative of the attitude of Roman Catholicism to scientific investigation.

Having seen and maturely considered the merits of your case with your confessions and excuses, and everything else which ought to be seen and considered, we pronounce, judge, and declare that you have rendered yourself vehemently suspected by this Holy Office of heresy, in that, (a) you have believed and held the doctrine (which is false and contrary to the Holy and Divine Scriptures) that the sun is the center of the world and that it does not move from east to west, and that the earth does move and is not the center of the world; and (b) that an opinion can be held and defended as probable after it has been decreed contrary to the Holy Scriptures, and, consequently, that you have incurred all the censures and penalties enjoined in the sacred canons and other general and particular codes against delinquents of this description. From this it is our pleasure that you be absolved, provided that, with a sincere heart and unfeigned faith, in Our presence you abjure, curse, and detest the said errors and heresies, and every other error and heresy contrary to the Catholic and Apostolic Church of Rome, and in the form that shall be prescribed to you. But that your grievous and pernicious error may not go altogether unpunished, and that you may be more cautious in future, and as a warning to others to

abstain from delinquencies of this sort, We decree that the book, "Dialogue of Galileo Galilei," be prohibited by public edict, and We condemn you to the prison of this Holy Office for a period determinable at Our pleasure, and by way of salutary penance We order you during the next three years to recite, once a week, the seven penitential psalms, reserving to Ourselves the power of moderating, commuting, or taking off the whole or part of the said punishment or penance.<sup>21</sup>

In response to this sentence Galileo was compelled to kneel and and make a declaration which ended as follows:

I abjure, curse, and detest the said errors and heresies, and generally every other error and heresy contrary to the said Holy Church, and I swear that I will never more in future say, or assert anything, verbally or in writing, which may give rise to a similar suspicion of me; and that if I shall know any heretic or any one suspected of heresy, I will denounce him to this Holy Office, or to the Inquisitor and Ordinary of the place in which I may be. I swear, moreover, and promise that I will fulfill and observe fully all the penances which have been or shall be laid on me by this Holy Office. But if it shall happen that I violate any of my said promises, oaths, and protestations (which God avert), I subject myself to all the pains and punishments which have been decreed and promulgated by the sacred canons and other general and particular constitutions against delinquents of this description. So, may God help me, and these His Holy Gospels which I touch with my own hands.<sup>22</sup>

Such action is wrong, and by no process of mental jugglery can it be made right. A repetition of it, or of anything even remotely resembling it, ought to be made forever impossible. Kill me for thinking, if you will, but do not sing the *Te Deum*. Frankly acknowledge that the institution demands the sacri-

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<sup>21</sup> Quoted in "Science, Religion, and Reality," p. 137. Edited by Joseph Needham. Macmillan. <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

fice of the individual and that it is saving its skin regardless of God or man. Intolerance is incompatible with the Holy Spirit.

In addition to words, which are formed into creeds, confessions, and systems, the religious experience makes use of symbolic acts and materials. Sacrifices and sacraments are found in all religions. Through appropriate ceremonies, worshipers enter into communion with the divine and experience the forgiveness of sin. The passover lamb, the scapegoat, and the animal sacrifices of Hebrew worship can be found in counterpart in many lands. There are ways of expressing the interdependence of men upon one another and of picturing the ability of the saints to take upon themselves the sins of others. Frazer gives these instances:

In great emergencies the sins of the Rajah of Manipur used to be transferred to somebody else, usually to a criminal, who earned his pardon by his vicarious sufferings. To effect the transference the Rajah and his wife, clad in fine robes, bathed on a scaffold erected in the bazaar, while the criminal crouched beneath it. With the water which dripped from them on him their sins also were washed away and fell on the human scapegoat. To complete the transference the Rajah and his wife made over their fine robes to their substitute, while they themselves, clad in new raiment, mixed with the people till evening. In Travancore, when a Rajah is near his end, they seek out a holy Brahman, who consents to take upon himself the sins of the dying man in consideration of the sum of ten thousand rupees. Thus prepared to immolate himself on the altar of duty, the saint is introduced into the chamber of death and closely embraces the dying Rajah, saying to him, "O King, I undertake to bear all your sins and diseases. May your highness live long and reign happily." Having thus

taken to himself the sins of the sufferer, he is sent away from the country and never more allowed to return.<sup>23</sup>

Christianity has had from the beginning two simple rites—baptism and the Lord's Supper. As water cleanses the body, so the Holy Spirit purifies the heart and conscience; as bread and wine, the common food and drink of all the people, nourish the body, so the living God, revealed in the sacrificial life and death of Jesus Christ, nourishes the soul. It is easy to understand these sacraments as symbols. They are simple, beautiful, and helpful—pictures of spiritual reality. But when they are regarded as creative powers which produce spiritual effects through the manipulation of material substance, religion is removed from the realm of experience and placed in the imaginary world of magic. That which makes experience possible is the fact that all effects are directly connected with their causes, and if water, bread, and wine can renew and nourish the inner nature of man, the realm of religion is ruled by purely arbitrary decree, and anything becomes possible. Then the only criterion of truth is the simple "God says it," miraculously revealed through the Church and dependent solely upon its word. The connected world of cause and effect falls to pieces, and anything may produce anything. Religion becomes magic pure and simple. Hickman truly declares that it is not necessary to go back to primitive religion to find the intimate relation between religion and magic. When the Protestant observes the celebration of the mass and is told that the wafer and wine of the

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<sup>23</sup> "The Golden Bough," p. 543. By Sir James George Frazer. Macmillan. 1923.

sacrament are transformed into the body and blood of Christ, he is in the presence of the magical. And he himself is not altogether free from magic. The emphasis laid upon modes of baptism by some Protestant Churches implies that there is a magical effect from the rite, and for no other reason than that Jesus Christ has arbitrarily commanded it.

Cardinal Gibbons asks and answers a question that a Protestant might put to him as follows:

But is that not a cruel and heartless doctrine which excludes from heaven so many harmless babes that have never committed any actual fault? To this I reply: Has not God declared that baptism is necessary for all? And is not God the supreme Wisdom and Justice and Mercy? I am sure, then, that there can be nothing cruel or unjust in God's decrees. The province of reason consists in ascertaining that God has spoken. When we know that he has spoken, then our investigation ceases and faith and obedience begin.<sup>24</sup>

Did God ever lay down such a command? When? Where? How? How could he? Is it possible for God to convey a command through any other channel than reason, conscience, and judgment? But, may he not give any kind of order through his Church? No, for the Church could never convince men of its authority except through the reasonableness of its doctrines and practices. It is a moral and spiritual impossibility for God to reach the consciousness with a command that is essentially unreasonable. Sacramentalism destroys the possibility of a rational and scientific theology. Bishop Gore has been laboring with devotion and diligence to reconcile the sacra-

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<sup>24</sup> "Faith of Our Fathers," p. 272. By James Cardinal Gibbons. John Murphy Company.

mental with the evangelical interpretation of Christianity. In his latest book he writes:

There is no more justification for setting the belief in the necessity of sacraments into opposition to the belief in the necessity of faith and conversion than there would be for setting the recognition of the necessity of food for physical nourishment into opposition to the recognition of the necessity of a mouth to receive the food and a digestion to assimilate it. The sacraments supply the spiritual nourishment, objectively and as if it were from the outside; but faith is the mouth which receives it, and the converted heart is the appetite which can assimilate it.<sup>25</sup>

But is it not quite plain that the relation of food to the mouth is not at all analogous to the relation of the sacraments to the spiritual appetite? There is a direct, natural, and necessary connection between the body and the food which must be taken to sustain it, while the bread and wine of the sacrament are only symbolic of spiritual nourishment. The grace which comes to faith in the Holy Communion is not different from the grace which comes through prayer, song, and sermon. No man can live without bodily food, but many Christians, noticeably the Quakers, have developed into stalwart Christians without making any use whatever of the outward signs and symbols of the inward and spiritual grace. Bishop Gore says that "it is difficult to exaggerate how deeply the sacramental principle is involved in the corporate or social idea of religion, or how necessary it is to hold fast to it, if we are to guard religion from the peril of individualism on the one hand and intellectualism on the other." But is not the common experience of fellowship with God in Jesus Christ a far

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<sup>25</sup> "Can We Then Believe?" p. 120. Scribner's.

closer bond than any sacrament could be? Is not a knowledge of the gospel a surer preventive of intellectualism than any formal rite? Sacramentalism is worse than either emotionalism or intellectualism, because thought and emotion are at least real, while the effort to make symbols produce spiritual effects opens the door for gross superstition. The greatest decline in Christian history was produced by interpreting the sacraments as spiritual causes instead of regarding them as symbolic.

The pagan element in Christianity entered through the door of sacramentalism. There is more in it of Mithras than of Christ. In the churches of the Mithraists all manner of magic rites were performed. Libations were poured out, candles were burned, and holy sacraments were administered to the initiated. "The flesh of a sacrificial animal was eaten, and its blood was drunk, and thus the celebrants were thought to take on the divinity and immortality of their blessed lord, Mithras." The baptized were thought to ascend at death to the abode of their god to dwell with him till the judgment day, upon which all the unbaptized would be annihilated and the faithful would return to earth to live upon it under the protection of Mithras forever. How like all this is the view of the Lord's Supper as "the medicine of immortality"! The change that came about is thus described by John Alfred Faulkner:

The original conception of the sacraments as instituted symbols of spiritual realities—baptism of regeneration through the Spirit, Supper of communion with the ascended Christ through the same Spirit—was changed into the conception of them as mysteries—that is, secret powers and truths acted out with appropriate splendor and suggestions of wonder-working



effects, with the use of magical formulæ, and which bring us by conduits divine grace and knowledge to the soul. Bonwetsch says well that the same view as in the mystery religions, the view which awaits a union with God (or the gods) either through deification in future immortality or mediated through dedication or consecration acts, leads by consecration acts to a furnishing with a divine substance or nature of this superintending hierarchy, essentially distinguished from the laity, as well as to a transformation of the worship of God from symbol and symbolical acts to celebration of mysteries which inclose the divine really in themselves, and a view which leads also from a pedagogy which has reference to a living faith to a mystagogy conducting to a mystical oneness with God. That conception borrowed from the mystery religions of sacraments as acted by priests really inclosing the divine, and thus automatically mediating to the participant (who presents no mortal barrier) divine forgiveness and power—that conception has come from ancient times (say the fourth century) to the present in all so-called Catholic Churches. In these the mystery religions still function to-day before our very eyes <sup>26</sup>

The same writer also says:

Christianity separated itself from all ancient religions by not being magical, no *deus ex machina*, no *ex opere operato*, no repeat-formulæ-and-it-is-done, no turn-common-things-into-sacred-by-an-incantation, no priestly sleight-of-hand, but everything came from the three fundamental spiritual vitalities, faith, hope, love: these three; but the greatest of these is—well, for the sinner, or the seeking saint, faith; for the despairing and downcast, hope; and for the believing and hoping Christian for whom Paul was writing, love.<sup>27</sup>

Roman Catholicism is committed to sacramentalism, while Protestantism is essentially evangelical. The difference between them is indicated by the

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<sup>26</sup> *Methodist Quarterly Review*, April, 1925,

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, July, 1924,

interpretation which each places upon the sentence, "This is my body." To the Catholic the verb is literally "is," while to the Protestant it means "symbolizes," or "typifies." The difference is vast and radical, and it is useless to try to mix them or make them mean the same thing. Roman Catholicism is a system based upon a miraculous Church, with miraculous sacraments which raise the recipient into the immortal world. Asceticism has its natural and fitting place in such a system. Protestantism, on the other hand, is based upon salvation by faith in God through Jesus Christ. In the Episcopal Church there are two parties, one Catholic and the other Protestant, and there is continual strife between them. Of the High-Church party and its imitation of the Roman Catholic Church Cardinal Gibbons wrote:

Only a few years ago the whole Protestant world was united in denouncing the use of floral decorations on our altars, incense, sacred vestments, and even the altar itself, as abominations of Popery. But of late a better spirit has taken possession of a respectable portion of the Protestant Episcopal Church. After having exhausted their wrath against our vestments, and vilified them as the rags of the wicked woman of Babylon, the members of the Ritualistic Church have, with remarkable dexterity, passed from one extreme to another. They don our vestments, they swing our censer, erect altars in their churches and adorn them with flowers and candlesticks. These Ritualists are, however, easily discerned from the true priest. Should one of them ever appear before the Father of the faithful in these ill-fitting robes the venerable Pontiff would exclaim, with the patriarch of old: "The voice indeed is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau." I feel the garment of the priest, but I hear the voice of the parson. God grant that, as our misguided brothers have assumed our sacerdotal garments, they may adopt our faith, that their speech may conform to their dress. Then, having

laid aside their earthly stoles, may they deserve, like all faithful priests, to be seen "standing before the throne, and in sight of the Lamb, with white stoles and palms in their hands, . . . saying: "Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb." <sup>28</sup>

We cannot do it, brethren. The best that any Protestant Church can accomplish in the way of sacramentalism is to produce a feeble and ridiculous imitation of what Catholicism has brought to perfection, because the genius of Protestantism is in the direction of religious experience through faith and not through sacraments. The two will not mix. What could be more incongruous than a married bishop leading a procession of celibate monks! It is this sort of thing that has brought religion down. The artificiality, the unreality, of it cannot but grate upon the mind of a scientific age. Though many of the devotees of sacramentalism are sincere and desperately in earnest in the effort to bring back the religious views of the Middle Ages, the movement will prove abortive. "For the kingdom of God is not *brosis* and *posis*; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." And what a pity it is for the Church to spend its strength in contending for theories that do not touch life and make no appeal to the moral and rational nature of man. No wonder thousands who cannot understand what the quarrels of religion are about are turning back to the world to seek in vain for happiness. Rufus M. Jones makes an arresting and alarming observation on the widening gap between the Church and large sections of the general public:

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<sup>28</sup> "Faith of Our Fathers," p. 337. John Murphy Company.

Those who have always moved in religious circles and whose lives have been devoted to the affairs and concerns of the Christian Church do not realize how widespread is the loss, not only of faith, but even of interest in the whole question of the existence of God. Persons who are isolated from, and more or less immune to, these profound tendencies of doubt go jauntily on threshing the old straw of controversy about the infallibility of Scripture, the form of sacraments, the sacred types of Church organization, the efficacy of ordination, the rewards and punishments of the world beyond, and many more subordinate problems, when the foundations of the entire structure of religious faith to a very large number of persons all about us are insubstantial, and when the question of God's existence receives less consideration in the minds of these persons from one year's end to another than does that of the cost of a motor car.<sup>29</sup>

The characteristics of the religious consciousness are faith, hope, and love. Faith in God establishes a relationship of mutual confidence which enriches experience, and there is a continual effort to express and describe the realities of the spiritual world. Experienced love, both the love of God and love for God, finds in the analogy of fatherhood the most satisfying symbol of expression. "This absolute moral sufficiency of the Object of religious dependence," says Macintosh, "is summed up in the pictorial language of religion in the expressions, 'God, the Father' and 'your Father in heaven, who is perfect.' The term 'Father,' as applied to God, like the term 'King,' is more or less metaphorical, and the failure to take this sufficiently into account has been responsible in part for controversy as to whether the 'Fatherhood of God' is to be taken as universal or restricted in its scope." God is fatherly toward all, but only

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<sup>29</sup> "Religious Foundations," p. 1. Macmillan.

those who are filial toward him and reciprocate the divine love can experience the "divine fatherhood." "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God."

The relation existing between a human father and his child is symbolic of the relation between God and man, but it is a picture which does not reproduce a perfect likeness. The human father is not an absolute creator of offspring. He is rather the medium of the creative power of God. And when the child grows to manhood he becomes the equal of the parent, while God forever remains the source of life, and all men are subordinate to him and wholly dependent upon him for the continuance of their existence. It is necessary to have due regard for the analogous nature of any expression which attempts to make clear to the human mind the quality of the divine reality. Canon Streeter says:

Though to personify the Power behind things is a necessity, it is a dangerous necessity. Man cannot be trusted to make God in his own image. Pass in review all the things that man has imagined his Deity to demand or to approve—human sacrifice, temple prostitution, grotesque asceticism, the rack and the stake, not to mention the endless routine of senseless ritual and trivial superstition. *Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum!* A religion which personifies unworthily the Power behind things will do so far more to retard than to advance the highest welfare of the race. That is why an epoch in human progress dates from the suggestion, perhaps first made by St. Paul, that instead of picturing God in their own image, or in the image traditional in a particular community, men should picture him in the image of Jesus Christ. Historic Christianity has never quite arisen to this conception. Hitherto it has always compromised; its teachers have lacked the insight or the courage to reject out and out certain elements in the conception of God derived from earlier beliefs.

But just in so far as Christianity has risen to its heritage and has conceived of God in terms of Jesus Christ it has put before the world a personification of the Divine which at least is not unworthy.<sup>30</sup>

Faith in God, especially as he is revealed in Jesus Christ, means hope—unlimited and irrepressible hope. It has often been remarked that Israel was a nation of hope—always hope for the nation, and, later, hope for the individual. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Hope thou in God." The prophets abound in descriptions of a glorious future, in which their ideals of social righteousness would be realized and the true God would be known and worshiped "from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof." When the great world powers seemed to make the destiny of the chosen nation impossible of achievement, the hope took the direction of a Messianic kingdom. In due time the Son of Man would descend from the sky, destroy his enemies, and establish a righteous reign. We smile at the literal and somewhat childish descriptions of Apocalyptic and note the similarity between Jewish visions and pictures of the future as given in other nations. In Persia, for instance, Zoroaster pictured a terrible battle between hell and heaven. Good and evil would engage in a protracted war, and the whole universe would feel the shock of the encounter. Ahura Mazda would come out victor, and then all the hills and mountains would pour down over the earth and all men would have to pass through the boiling lava. "To the just and righteous, however, that lava would be as warm milk, only to the wicked would it be

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<sup>30</sup> "Reality," p. 137. Macmillan.

scalding and fatal. The just and righteous would wade through it with laughter on their lips, rejoicing over a victory so well won. And the earth thereafter would be an everlasting paradise wherein there would be no more mountains or deserts or wild beasts or savages." <sup>31</sup> But Apocalyptic is profoundly significant as an expression of Israel's unquenchable hope.

There was the same hope for the individual. When the godly man died before the glorious day, the question was asked, "What will become of the righteous man who was not permitted to live to see the reign of righteousness for which he sighed?" and the answer was ready, "God will raise him up." In the early days the apostles faced the same question. What will be the share in the kingdom of those who have fallen on sleep? The Messiah will come again, bringing his saints with him. "With what body do they come?" "Thou fool, that which thou thyself sowest is not quickened except it die."

This hope, which would not be destroyed, or repressed, was the inevitable outgrowth of an experience of God. "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." He whom God has once acknowledged as his friend can never pass beyond the divine care. Of the many pictures that have been drawn of heaven and the future life two things are sure. One is that men are conscious of immortal life, of a quality of consciousness that owes its origin to kinship with an eternal world, and the other is that, whatever the world of the future may be, it will not be like the picture. "No mental

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<sup>31</sup> "This Believing World," p. 206. By Lewis Browne. Macmillan.

picture we can frame of any life beyond the present," says Streeter, "is likely to be even approximately a correct image of the reality." But it will be infinitely better.

All pictures of the future are symbolic. The prophets and seers never intended for their visions to be regarded as scientifically accurate statements of reality, and the demand that their poetic language be taken literally tends to cast a doubt upon the reality for which it stands. The prosaic mind of the Occident distilled from the figures of the Bible an eschatology which contained heaven, paradise, purgatory, and hell, and the theologians of the Middle Ages dogmatically asserted that the mysteries of the future life had been clearly revealed. Protestantism, with a dogmatism no less emphatic, abolished purgatory, and, in the greater sections of it, paradise as well, but retained heaven and hell. This air of dogmatic certainty held until about the middle of the nineteenth century. "The middle of the last century," says W. H. Wood, "marks the beginning of the present religious thinking. At that time there was a distinct uniformity in the presentation of what Christianity is and teaches. The main items were: Hell fire; eternal damnation; the inspiration of the Bible; no salvation for the heathen; salvation by faith; the grace of God; sin; baptism; and heaven for those who believed and were faithful. Salvation was individual and not social. To doubt was one of the greatest sins."<sup>32</sup> Universalism came as a dogmatic reaction equal and opposite. While the orthodox confidently declared that every man dying impenitent

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<sup>32</sup> "The Religion of Science," p. vii. Macmillan.



was eternally damned, the universalist asserted just as confidently and dogmatically that all men would finally be saved. Then some preachers—Canon Farrar, for instance—and poets like Tennyson and Browning began to entertain “the larger hope.”

My own hope is, a sun will pierce  
The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;  
That after Last, returns the First,  
Though a wide compass round be fetched,  
That what began best can't end worst,  
Nor what God blessed once prove accurst.

The religious thinker of the present day is more reticent in his assertions than the Roman Catholic or the traditional Protestant. In answer to many questions concerning the future, he says candidly, “We do not know.” All knowledge grows out of experience, and the future can be known only as it is inferred from a present knowledge of reality which experience affords. The Bible tells us nothing concerning the great beyond, except as faith sees it, and the faith of the present day has the same insight into the unseen world that the faith of the early days had. The chief apostle said, “We know not anything as we ought to know it”—that is, as we would like to know it, and may know it some day, if we follow on to know. But we of this undogmatic age know more than we think we know, just as the dogmatists of an earlier day knew less; for while they mistook symbols for reality itself and lost the figurative significance of the rich Bible imagery, we share the Bible experience of reality and recognize the language as symbolic. If “we falter” where other and earlier men have “firmly trod,” our hesitation is in regions that were in fact always as uncertain as they are now, though

men confidently professed a knowledge that they did not really possess, while the reality which the symbol was meant to express remains as certain and as accessible to experience as ever before.

Coming back, then, to the solid ground of experience, we are conscious of an inward urge, which is obviously from above in that it cannot be thrown off at will, to conserve spiritual values. We ourselves feel that we are engaged in producing values that are above time and outlast time, and that God has set for us these tasks. "It must be admitted," writes Louis De Launay, "that life when considered only as earthly duration is pure nonsense. The instinct which impels us to fill our earthly life with disinterested efforts, scientific research, artistic achievements, and intense devotion is rationally still greater nonsense. The more we are accustomed to seek for the cause of all phenomena by the method of scientific determinism, the more desperately we demand an explanation of this nonsense, the more insistent we shall be in asking by virtue of what order or what tendency (itself materially inexplicable) this human mildew has been able, first of all to appear, and then to develop and make progress on this planet."<sup>33</sup>

There is rather general agreement now that the chief object in human life is the creation and preservation of spiritual values. These values must be conserved in humanity, if at all; and since humanity is made up of individuals and has no existence apart from individuals, they must be conserved in the individual. "If, then, at last upon the physically embodied race inhabiting this gradually cooling planet

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<sup>33</sup> "A Modern Plea for Christianity," p. 39. Macmillan.

the 'slow, sure doom' shall fall," writes Macintosh, "without immortality all values of and for human personality, social as well as individual, will be as if they never had been, and moral optimism will have been all along a delusion and a lie."<sup>34</sup>

From Plato down, all serious thinkers have believed that the universe is rational, that God is working to ends, and that he intends to get something done. Man is not only used in accomplishing these ends; he is called upon to share them, and he enters more or less consciously into coöperation with the divine purpose. His share may be made permanent as well as not. The power of God is certainly equal to it, for the same power that brought man into being can certainly continue his existence. What, then, must we think of God, if he raises man into conscious life in which character is developed, and then, having used him for worthy ends, tosses him to the void? Streeter pertinently asks:

If a human parent would not allow the extinction of a cherished child, is God likely to consent to such a thing? If a reasonably good employer hates to regard his workmen simply as "hands," as mere instruments for working out his purpose, are God's thoughts less than his? If a general loves the men whom at times he is compelled to treat as "cannon fodder" incidental to the attainment of a larger end, will God care less? Will he be content to treat a living personality like a rocket which, once its cascade of stars has been displayed, has fulfilled its function and falls back unregarded into the surrounding gloom? <sup>35</sup>

But even if some great and worthy souls deserve immortality, may not the countless millions, who

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<sup>34</sup> "The Reasonableness of Christianity," p. 67. Scribner's.

<sup>35</sup> "Reality," p. 315. Macmillan.

swarm the earth for their little day, pass out and cease to be? Macintosh replies:

When it is asserted that there are persons whose existence is not worth being made immortal, there is either a failure to appreciate the absolute value of a moral will, or else a failure to grasp the possibilities of moral development under education and discipline. As William James suggests, the fact that we have no use for these persons is no proof that they may not be very interesting to one who more fully knows them. Nor is it any proof, we may add, that they may not become of incalculable actual value, as they are now of incalculable potential value.<sup>36</sup>

The cloud of doubt which has come over many minds concerning the future of the individual can be removed only by faith—faith in God and human destiny. It is due only in part to scientific discoveries. Facts that minister to doubt are now no greater than they were in apostolic times. Life was as sordid then as now, the dead looked as dead. Faith declares its conviction that "life is ever lord of death," and that human personality will continue beyond the grave. But how, God knows. What heaven is like, what the occupations of the future world will be, may only be guessed.

Heaven stands, in the language of religion, for the transcendent reality and future realization of the ideal. Naturally, therefore, its content has varied greatly according to differences in the interests and experiences of those cherishing the ideal. Thus the ancient Egyptian looked forward to a heaven of farming under ideal conditions, where the Nile never failed to overflow and harvests were always bountiful; the ancient Teuton, to Valhalla, with its endless round of eating, drinking, and fighting; and the North American Indian, to the Happy Hunting Ground. Intermediate between the two extremes of

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<sup>36</sup> "Theology as an Empirical Science," p. 74. Macmillan.

the Buddhist ideal of Nirvana, or rest through extinction of desire, and the Mohammedan ideal of satisfaction through the gratification of all desires in Paradise, however sensual those desires might be, the essentially Christian ideal is that of rest through the extinction of immoral desire and joy in the progressive satisfaction of every right desire. But traditional Christianity has not always given to this general idea a content such as can be satisfactory to the modern mind. According to the medieval mind "Heaven" was a sort of ideal monastery, with nothing but distinctly religious interests and activities. To the Puritans and older evangelicals it was a sort of ideal meetinghouse or "protracted meeting"—"where congregations ne'er break up, and Sabbaths never end." And to many within the Christian community as well as to the oppressed and overworked in all ages, "Heaven" appealed as being that ideal abode "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest." And so for many there grew up what G. B. Foster has called "that worst of all dualisms, joyless labor here and laborless joy hereafter."<sup>37</sup>

Our fathers used to sing,

There on a green and flowery mound  
Our ransomed souls shall sit,  
And through unnumbered years recount  
The labors of their feet.

Any busy man who has ever tried to rest by doing nothing knows that he would be content with such a heaven for about twenty-four hours. Percy Gardner, whose imagination has been chastened with the passing of the years, is no longer able to form any adequate picture of the hereafter, but he looks out into the future in a serene old age, calmly sure that God will provide what is best. He writes:

The fact is that no one has been able to sketch any kind of future life for the individual, the prospect of which, if it be

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<sup>37</sup> "Theology as an Empirical Science," p. 209. By D. C. Macintosh. Macmillan.

extended to infinity, will attract a reasonable man. Our ancestors spoke of the heavenly life as one long Sabbath, but we, who find that a too quiet Sunday begins to be oppressive, smile at the phrase. But those who have tried to substitute other imaginations have fared no better. Young men and women, in the ardor of first love, speak of that love as one that will last forever. Very often it cools or evaporates in a few years or weeks. Men and women who have experienced the happiness which comes from works of active benevolence are apt to think that an eternity of such work will be satisfactory. But no kind of individual existence known to us would last very long without becoming oppressive. The fable of Tithonus, who acquired immortality, and soon began to envy those who were mortal, has deep meaning. People who are growing elderly will easily appreciate it.<sup>38</sup>

G. Stanley Hall, on the other hand, abandoned hope in his old age and recorded the bitterness of his soul in a horrible book on "Senescence," in which he says that he is so certain that the grave is the end that he would be glad to go back to the beginning and live life over again under any conditions. The world that old age faces is in all cases the same. The difference lies in the fact that some men lose faith. There is enough in the experience of every man to turn his vision into utter darkness and plunge him into the depths of despair; and there is also enough to give every cloud a silver lining and fill the heart with imperishable confidence. "But the souls of the just are in the hand of God, and the torment of death shall not touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die; and their departure was taken for misery; and their going away from us, for utter destruction: but they are in peace. And though in

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<sup>38</sup> "The Practical Basis of Christian Belief," p. 234. Scribner's.

the sight of men they suffered torments, their hope is full of immortality." (Wisdom 3: 1-4).

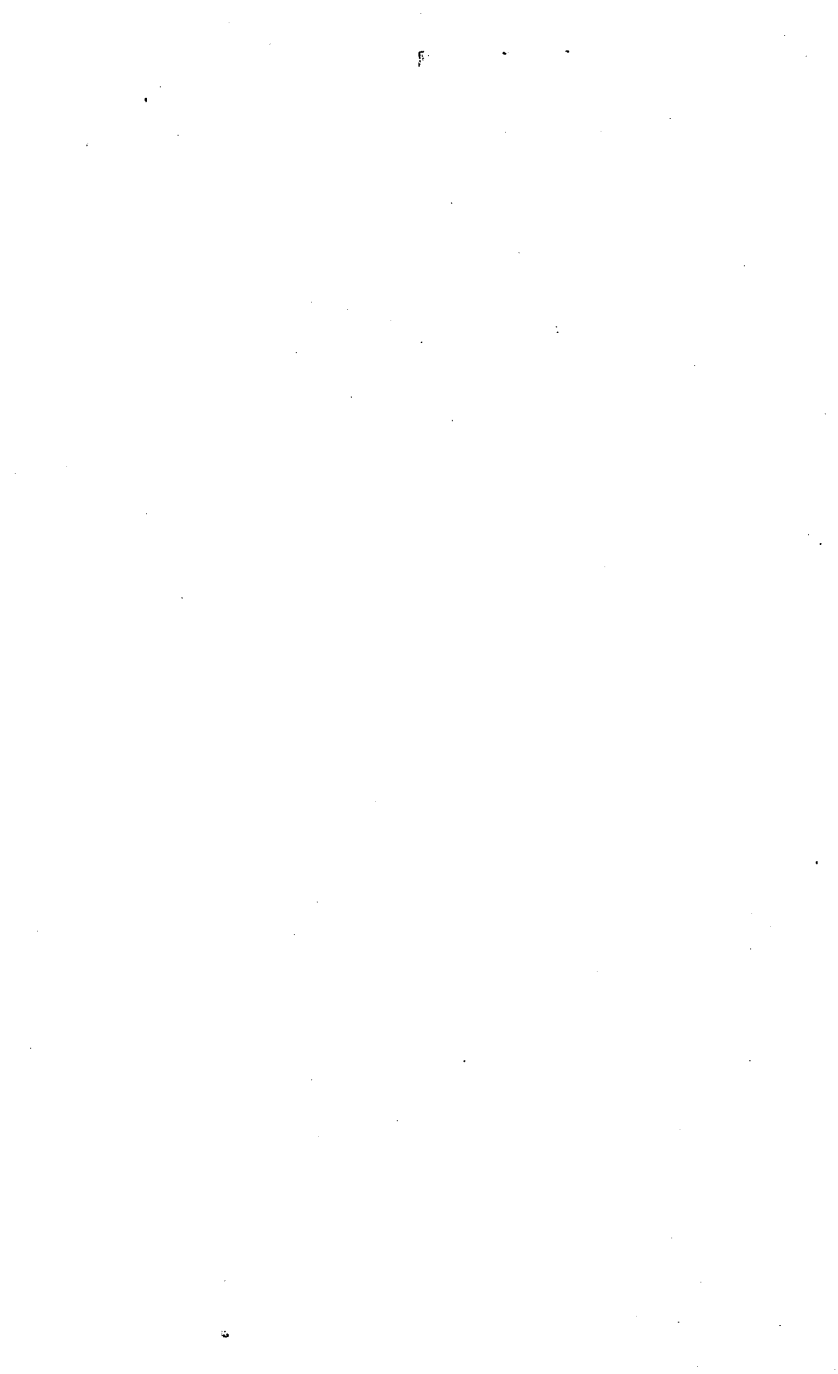
Jesus Christ assured his disciples that he was in possession of deathless life and that they could share his life forever. "For I live, and ye shall live." "Moreover," says Macintosh, "this assurance of Jesus that God would give him victory over death and the grave gives us assurance. We see that human life at its best is sure of immortality. It fortifies our souls in the immortal faith to know that what we tend to become assured of when we are spiritually at our best is what Jesus was assured of, whose life was of all lives the best." <sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> "Theology as an Empirical Science," p. 207. Macmillan.

**III**  
**SCIENTIFIC RELIGION**





### III

## SCIENTIFIC RELIGION

FIFTEEN years ago a significant book appeared from the pen of James W. Lee under the title, "The Religion of Science." Seven years later Douglas Clyde Macintosh published his work on "Theology as an Empirical Science." Five years ago a volume written by W. H. Wood came from the press, bearing the same title as Dr. Lee's book; and last year Henry Nelson Wieman presented a remarkable and highly valuable study on "Religious Experience and Scientific Method."

Dr. Lee wrote to show that the laws of religion are as certain and as ascertainable as the laws of nature and that progress in religious thought and life waits upon scientific investigation and demonstration. Dr. Wood, though writing under the same title, produced an entirely different book. His object was to prove that science has developed a religion which differs radically from Christianity—a "religion of science" which has for canons matter, energy, and mechanism; for its Bible, the sacred book of nature; and for its creed, reason and evolution. He is supported in this contention by a French scientist, De Launay, who writes in his volume just from the press: "We must realize that there has been developed in our day a religion of science which is intolerant like all other religions. We may not dispute its postulates without exciting the indignation of its lay teachers any more than we may express the least doubt with

reference to a miracle of Lourdes without shocking country vicars." However, there is good reason for believing that, while some scientists have followed in the wake of Haeckel in undertaking to make a new religion, most students of nature and man still claim to be Christians and profess the same faith that is held by their nonprofessional brethren.

But Lee considered himself a pioneer and intended that his book should blaze a trail in the wilderness. He writes in the preface:

We of this generation are making the amazing discovery, too, that students of the visible world never had any valid reason for supposing that they had a monopoly of all the territory open to scientific explorers. They do not know theoretically any more about material realities than the preachers know theoretically about spiritual realities. There is absolutely no scientific knowledge of the outside world of tangible fact, or of the inside world of spiritual fact, except such as man has gained by the test of experiment. The human intellect is capable of spinning theories to wrap around everything in heaven and earth, but not one of these theories can be called scientific until it is tested by the will in action and proven to be verifiable in experience.<sup>1</sup>

However, Lee's contribution was only one stream in a mighty current. Many writers have been studying the same theme, and the whole trend is now in the direction which he pointed out. Macintosh has followed up his earlier work with his recent volume on "The Reasonableness of Christianity," for which he was awarded the Bross prize, and the discussion of current questions in a book entitled "Science, Religion, and Reality," by some of the most noted men of the day, indicates that the best thought of

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<sup>1</sup> "The Religion of Science," p. 9. By J. W. Lee. Revell.

England and the continent of Europe is also moving in this direction. Wieman is very sure that something tremendously important and significant is stirring in the realm of religious thinking. He says:

What are the signs that religion is beginning to differentiate itself with a distinctness that it never had before? There are many. Most striking is the intensive study of religion that is being made. Historical, psychological, sociological, and philosophical studies of religion have been prosecuted during the last fifty years to a degree that is unparalleled. The persistent and strenuous efforts to define religion point to the same thing. In other days men were content to take their religion without attempting to define it. But not so now. Religion is becoming highly self-conscious, and self-consciousness is a mark of growing distinctness of individuality. The groping efforts of the Church to find its own unique function in society point to the same thing. The separation of Church and state, and Church and education, the ever clearer line of demarcation that is being drawn between religion and morals, religion and science, religion and art, all tend to emphasize or force to the point of recognition, the distinctive character of religion. Religion as a distinct function is emerging. We know of no greater need to be met than just this of bringing religion forth into clarity and distinctness. For only as this distinct and essential function of religion in human life is recognized and provided for can religion play her rightful part in meeting the deepest needs of men. In the past, as we have seen, it was not necessary to clarify the character of religion in order to enable her to do her proper work. But to-day it is.<sup>2</sup>

The simple proposition underlying this widespread movement is just this: If religion has facts, the study of it can, and should be, scientific. As Dr. Lee puts it:

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<sup>2</sup> "Religious Experience and Scientific Method," p. 359.  
By H. N. Wieman. Macmillan,

If God expresses himself in tangible facts only, then there can be no science, except such as is turned into the mind through the observation of the thought contained in material objects. But the elements of human will and emotion and intelligence and spirit are expressions of divine thought no less than are the elements and forces of matter. If we can read God's thoughts as penned in the rocks and out of it get science, why should we not be able to read his thought as expressed through facts of religion and get science?<sup>3</sup>

And it is high time that religion should become scientific, if its teachers are to hold the respectful attention of thinking men. All other realms of interest are being taken in hand by men who have undergone the discipline of careful study and observation. When the astronomer developed the science of the stars, the astrologer lost his standing among respectable people; when the chemist took possession of his field, the alchemist had to move out; when medicine became scientific, the quack lost the right to practice. One by one, all other fields have been closed to mountebankery and charlatanry, and incompetent and false practitioners have gone over into what Dr. Lee calls "the religious commons"—a field which belongs to no one in particular and may be exploited by any who may have the temerity to assert that he has received a call to religious leadership. Dr. Lee again says:

A theological edifice built in accordance with the scientific method, large enough to cover all that portion of ground called "the Religious Commons," is the demand of the present age. Under this structure we can house and rearrange all our religious doctrines, but keeping our theoretical separated from our practical truth. The teachers of religion have as many doctrines they can verify in experience and objectify in every-

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<sup>3</sup> "The Religion of Science," p. 154. Revell.

day life, as the students of physical science have of theories they can prove to be workable in practical affairs. Christian civilization has been created by the dynamics and not by the theoretics of the gospel. As in the first centuries of the Christian history, the Church to-day is being thrown back upon experience as the source of the spiritual life. The final test of Christianity, as the religion of science, is the experience of those who amid all the trials and temptations of life have tried it and objectified it in character; so the final test of any particular physical science is the experience of those who have tried it and objectified it in the work of practical life. Scientific religious knowledge is secured on precisely the same lines we follow to obtain verifiable knowledge of the material world.<sup>4</sup>

There are three ways of reaching and presenting the truths of religion: the speculative, the authoritative, and the scientific. The first is represented in Rationalism, the second in Roman Catholicism, and the third in that section of Protestantism which looks to experience for a knowledge of the powers and principles of the spiritual life. The speculative method is followed by men who regard religious truth merely as a matter of reason and undertake to deduce the whole of religious thought from certain fundamental principles. The authoritative method is adopted by those who look upon religion as something imposed upon the individual from the outside and to be accepted without question. The scientific method relies upon experience and draws upon the whole of the religious life of individuals and institutions for data from which it may formulate the laws and theories of religion.

There can be little doubt as to which of these methods will prevail in the religion of the future.

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<sup>4</sup> "The Religion of Science," p. 65. Revell,

Rationalism failed utterly to give an adequate account of religion and proved wholly incapable of generating an experience of religion. The world has broken away from authority in every field of interest and demands that all claims be subjected to the test of experience. If religion is to retain its place of power in the world's life, it must be scientific. The Church will be judged, not by its claims and pretensions, but by its fruitfulness. When religion becomes scientific, people will cease to quarrel over it and begin to apply its principles to the whole of life. "It is a remarkable fact," says Dr. Lee, "that estranging differences and bitter contentions among men have never grown out of that small part of their knowledge convertible into useful results, but always out of their theoretical opinions which had no bearing one way or another upon the work of everyday life."<sup>5</sup>

Even now a far larger part of recognized religious truth rests upon experience rather than upon authority. Since each Church or denomination is independent of every other, no Church recognizes any authority except its own. The truth contained in its own confession may be regarded as authoritative, but the truth which is contained in the confessions of other Churches is recognized only upon its merits. Since no one denomination has in it the majority of all the Christians in the world, there is more religion outside of any one Church than in it—more religion independent of its authority than subject to it. That is to say, Christians generally, at least among Protestants, measure Christians of other Churches than their own, not by their acceptance of an author-

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<sup>5</sup>"The Religion of Science," p. 10. Revell.

itative creed, but by their religious experience. No Church will be disposed to claim that it alone contains the larger part of the world's religion, except the Roman Catholic Church, and the claims of that Church must be tested by an appeal to fact. It is a matter of simple observation that the vital and creative forces at work in the modern world have produced the largest results in those countries in which the religious convictions of the individual have been respected.

We may strike off the speculative method as too barren to demand serious consideration. It merely furnishes a system of concepts out of touch with reality. Speculative religion is a kind that never was and never will be. It is "up in the air," and beyond the range of experience. It has been said that the scientific attitude of Englishmen, Frenchmen, and Germans of a hundred years ago could be illustrated by the way in which each would present a dissertation on the elephant. The German would retire into his study and evolve an elephant out of his own inner consciousness. By certain fundamental principles he would know what an elephant ought to be. The Frenchman would put in a half day at the zoo and then spend the afternoon in writing a perfectly delightful essay on the elephant. The Englishman would go in search of the elephant, and after studying him in his native haunts for a year or two, would write a scientific treatise upon the subject. The Rationalist is like the German of that earlier time in that he is doctrinaire. He remains detached from the arduous toil that faces religion in a world of evil and temptation and from his Jovian elevation tells Israel what to do.



But progress in religious life and thought always comes from within. The Reformation was not born of the light touch of the *littérateur* of the Renaissance, but of the travail of Luther the monk. A better religion comes only through men who are doing their best with the religion they already have. It was because John Wesley was earnestly striving to serve God in the Church of England that he was led out into a better way. We may therefore put to one side the speculative philosopher whose chief interest in religion is to find a rational explanation for its phenomena and the literary genius who is merely hunting material for his novel.

The vital issue is between authoritative and scientific religion. Both are alive and going. Scientific religion is now drawing to itself the earnest attention of students in philosophy, science, and theology, as well as of statesmen and sociologists. But authoritative religion had a monopoly until about four hundred years ago and still has the support of the most august, impressive, and enduring organization that the world has ever known. Moreover, there is a strange recrudescence of it now in all European countries and in England; not only the Established Church is affected by it, but some of the Free Churches as well. Authoritative religion has a case. Percy Gardner recognizes the service it has rendered in the past and suggests the reason for its inability to rule the future, when he says:

Most of the great religions of the world have started from authority. Judaism has an ordered and authoritative exposition of ethics in the Pentateuch, Islam in the Koran. These codes are vastly superior to the mere customary and tribal morality which they superseded; they represent a sudden

raising of the ethical standard. Most people would allow that the Mosaic code marked a great advance on the current morality of the heathen nations of Canaan, the tribes whom Joshua subdued. That the code of Mohammed also marked an advance on the religion of the tribes of Arabia is less generally realized. Many people are so shocked at one particular institution of Islam, polygamy, that they are blinded to the excellence of many sides of the religion. But the historians who have studied the origin of that religion have highly estimated its moral value. And travelers in the Near East who have come into contact with Mohammedans always speak highly of the character of many of them. In the history of Islam, as in that of Christianity, there have been frequent reformations, as sages and saints have turned back from the corruption around them to the purity of the pristine faith. And as J. H. Newman has well observed, we cannot wholly deny the inspiration of a religion which has been so firm a bond of society and so greatly promoted brotherly feeling among believers. There have been times in the history of the world when the Mohammedan states were superior to the Christian alike in ethics and in intellectual enlightenment. Nevertheless, both Judaism and Islam are, by the very fact that they are religions of authority, and so incapable of conforming to the intellectual and social changes in their surroundings, put out of court as religions of the future.<sup>6</sup>

It seems strange to us on this side of the Atlantic that English preachers can speak superciliously of the American controversy between Fundamentalism and Modernism as a belated quarrel which was settled in that country before the end of the last century and yet at the same time be in doubt whether they should accept or repudiate the Reformation. There is now bitter strife in the Established Church over the adoption of Roman Catholic practices, and at least one independent minister has displayed

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<sup>6</sup> "The Practical Basis of Christian Belief," p. 110. Scribner's.

amazing enthusiasm over the Christianity of the Middle Ages. With Lord Halifax urging the Church of England to pass over bodily into Roman Catholicism, and Bishop Gore advocating the same cause "with reservations," and Dr. Orchard singing the praises of Catholicism and prophesying the certain end of Protestantism, we may wonder what has come over the "tight little island" which has been for centuries the bulwark of religious and civil liberty.

A recent volume<sup>7</sup> by Dr. Orchard contains a sermon on "The Revival of Catholicism," which begins with a description of the restoration of an ancient monastery. "And here is everything back again," he gleefully exclaims, "just as if the Middle Ages were still alive, the Reformation had never happened, and Henry the Eighth had never existed. Such a restoration wakens strange reflections; for it is a symbol and a presage. It is an outward and visible sign of the Catholic revival, which is perhaps the most remarkable, because the least expected, of all the movements of this age of ours." This Protestant minister says of Roman Catholicism: "On the basis of any expectation of the future, it is the one religion that can be trusted to survive, and, however it changes, to remain the same. On the mere fact of the growth of the population it must beat its rival: for Catholic families tend to be larger than those of Protestants." Of his own cause he says: "Protestantism is being slowly discredited." "Once the fundamental rightness of the Church is questioned," he ominously asserts, "then everything comes to be

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<sup>7</sup> See "The Finality of Christ," pp. 110-115. By W. E. Oschard. Doran.

questioned, and slowly but surely the way is opened either to unabashed atheism or to pantheism, which turns out to be the same thing with a politer name." "There can be no doubt," he adds, "that Protestantism is a middle position between atheism and Catholicism and an unstable position at that, so that the stream of movement runs either way, but here can never long remain in suspense." The Reformation appears to have been a rather sorry undertaking for which we should make apology. "The Reformation period provides an unpleasant story," continues Dr. Orchard, "and historical research can only increase disrespect for the origin of Protestantism, even if it does nothing to increase respect for Catholicism. But the one fruitful line which does not leave us cynical of the whole business is to recognize that the evils of Catholicism were no necessary part of Catholic doctrine, and to recognize also that the Reformation was not motivated by diabolical inspiration, but that in indignation against abuses it allowed itself to be carried away by anger and so parted with something which was of value and which Protestantism can never restore." Of course, Dr. Orchard would have the Catholic Church mend some of its ways, and he proceeds to give some good advice, which that Church will not thank him for or heed; for who is he, a mere Protestant, to be making suggestions to an infallible Church?

The Catholic revival is on in England. God grant that it may never reach this country. And yet we can recognize the invaluable service which the Roman Catholic Church rendered as the schoolmistress of Europe for more than a millennium and heartily agree with Bishop Gore when he says:

The debt of Christendom to the Catholic Church, in its widest acceptance, in spite of disfiguring abuses and defects, must be regarded by any serious person as incalculably great. And "the religion of Jesus" apart from the Church would not be the religion of the New Testament, nor indeed the religion of Jesus at all. Moreover, it must not be overlooked that amongst the most remarkable features of the Church in its long history has been its power of recovery or resurrection from the dead.<sup>8</sup>

The essential difference between authoritative and scientific religion is this: Authoritative religion finds the certainty of truth in the word of properly accredited teachers, while scientific religion finds it in the power of the truth itself. In the former the prophet guarantees the truth, while in the latter the truth guarantees the prophet. In the one, the truth is received because the prophet speaks it; in the other, the prophet is recognized as a prophet because he speaks the truth. The credentials of the prophet in authoritative religion are miracles and prophecy. After the claim to be a representative of God has been substantiated by power to work miracles and foretell future events, the utterances of the prophet must be taken upon his word. The credentials of the prophet in scientific religion are found in his spiritual insight which appears in the self-evidencing power of the truth which he utters. Though an angel from heaven speak any other gospel than that which presents the love of God as it is revealed in Jesus Christ, let him be anathema. The clearest and most prevailing example of authoritative religion is Roman Catholicism, which depends solely upon authority for the certainty of religious truth. When the pope speaks

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"Can We Then Believe?" p. 136. Scribner's.

upon any question of faith or morals, his word is final, and all loyal Catholics must forever keep silent. Dr. Lee thus expresses his opinion of this system:

The Pope of Rome, who best represents this entire method of ruling by authority based on dogma, rather than by authority based on the nature of the facts of religion, still issues his bulls and encyclical letters. He and his sacred college of cardinals guard with sleepless vigilance the priceless treasures of religion. And they are doubtless good and earnest and and self-sacrificing men, and deeply consecrated to the cause or religion. But they are victimized by the subtle, insidious influence of a wrong method. They are profoundly convinced that they are called of heaven to protect religion from the inroads of agnosticism, atheism, and nihilism. They fail to see that their authority would be infinitely greater if based upon the dynamic facts of religion rather than upon the ecclesiastical dogmas with which the spiritual facts at a particular period of history clothed themselves. They identify religion with the crude products the mind turned off in a dark age in its attempts to interpret it. They have taken the report the human mind gave of the religious facts in the infancy of Christian history, "when things were seen dimly and distortedly, through mists of ignorance and prejudice, and have made of them in all their circumstantial detail finalities, the very buttresses and grounds of salvation." They approach religious phenomena, therefore, not through the simple facts which have made Christian history, but through a bewildering reticulation of unproven assumptions and a tangled mass of metaphysical propositions. They have founded their world-wide ecclesiastical hierarchy upon the early crude products of religion rather than upon the permanent and eternally new facts of it. If the Roman Catholic Church had been guided in its marvelous history by the facts rather than by the interpretations the human mind first gave of them, it never would have been possible for the historian Lecky to say, in speaking of medieval Catholicism, "The Church of Rome has inflicted a greater amount of unmerited suffering than any other religion that has ever existed amongst mankind." Nor would it have been possible for the sixteenth-

century German theologian to say, in speaking of his contemporary members of the clerical profession, "By faith we mean not the conformity of what we say with fact, but with an opinion about divine things founded on credulity and persuasion, which seeks after profit." <sup>9</sup>

Such a system is not based upon reason. It cannot appeal to the judgment and conscience of the individual for the corroboration of its truth. One either accepts the authority, or he does not. And yet the exercise of reason cannot be avoided, for every man must use his judgment in choosing the authority to which he will submit. But, if reason is allowed in making choice of authority through an initial test, there is no ground for ceasing to exercise it in estimating the body of truth which the authority claims the right to impose. Gardner believes that authoritative religion depends upon veneration rather than upon reason. He says:

In the light of reason, nothing could seem more incongruous than any doctrine of infallibility. For everywhere, among things to be known, we find a multitude of probabilities of error to one of truth. The wisest man will hold erroneous views as to a thousand subjects; and his whole life may be devoted to a gradual elimination of what is false and a pursuit of what is true. The belief in infallibility, whether in the Bible, the Church, or any other authority, is obviously not based upon reason, but upon an emotion of veneration. Of course, it may be blindly accepted from custom or from social influence. But when it is more reasonably held, it may be based upon experience. It will often happen that, when a man is following his own opinion, there breaks in upon him a voice from some high source, spoken or written, which at once carries him away, which makes him feel that his own opinion is superficial, poor, and worthless, and that the new light is of infinitely greater value. He follows this light and finds

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<sup>9</sup> "The Religion of Science," p. 46. Revell.

that it has led him to truer thought and nobler action than he could by himself have reached. If this has happened often, his view of the inspired voice will rise higher and higher, until he follows it without hesitation or demur. He may well speak of it as infallible. But what he really means by the phrase is not that he thinks it wholly incapable of error, but that he thinks it far more likely to be right than any view which he could form by the exercise of his own judgment. The infallibility will be limited, no doubt, to special fields; for no man can deny the truths which he learns by actual experience in the world at the bidding of an authority, however venerable. But in matters beyond sense and daily experience, he will rely on an authority which he has tried and not found wanting.<sup>10</sup>

For ascertaining the laws and principles of religious belief and conduct scientific religion relies wholly upon experience. All that can be known of God, man, and nature comes along this way. But the whole experience of religion does not come to any one man, and therefore it is not merely a question of what any individual may think of religion, but rather of what has been, or may be, arrived at through the experience of many, and especially of prophets and great leaders who have had "a genius for religion." The truths of religion are based upon both individual and collective experience. It is as unreasonable for the individual to depend solely upon himself for religious knowledge as it is for him to surrender his right to think and wholly abandon himself to the Church. Roman Catholicism and individualism go to opposite extremes. Protestantism has not yet had time to work out its doctrine of the Church and the rights of the individual, and to this fact may be

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<sup>10</sup> "The Practical Basis of Christian Belief," p. 95. Scribner's,



attributed much of the hesitancy and instability of which Gardner speaks:

In England and America a multitude of Christians, good and highly religious men, approach the faith from a merely personal standpoint, attaining to a personal relationship to God in Christ, but looking on Churches, and indeed on all the outward phenomena of religion, as merely destined to help individuals toward a higher and more continuous realization of God. At the other extreme the Roman Church subordinates completely the individual to the society; it is for the organized society to dictate creeds and principles of conduct, and for the members of the Roman Church merely to obey. So we have continual cross-currents, many members of the Roman Church constantly rebelling against ordinances which offend the conscience and lapsing from loyalty and many Protestants falling into despair of individual religion and seeking a haven of rest in a Church which has no doubt of its own infallibility, and is willing, on condition of obedience, to undertake the whole responsibility of the saving of the souls of its votaries.<sup>11</sup>

Scientific religion makes many divisions in the Church possible and some divisions probable. As long as people think freely upon so vital a matter as religion, individuals will arise with views that differ from those generally accepted, and vigorous leaders will organize groups about themselves and their opinions. But it is better to have the strife of division than the peace of death. The oppression of the dominating hierarchy of the Middle Ages presents a far more depressing picture than that given by Cardinal Gibbons as he paints the modern Church torn and impotent through the multiplication of sects:

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<sup>11</sup> "The Practical Basis of Christian Belief," p. 259. Scribner's.

No one will deny that in our day there exists a vast multitude of sects, which are daily multiplying. No one will deny that this multiplying of creeds is a crying scandal, and a great stumblingblock in the way of the conversion of heathen nations. No one can deny that these divisions in the Christian family are traceable to the assumption of the right of private judgment. Every new-fledged divine, with a superficial education, imagines that he has received a call from heaven to inaugurate a new religion, and he is ambitious of handing down his fame to posterity by stamping his name on a new sect. And every one of these champions of modern creeds appeals to the unchanging Bible in support of his ever-changing doctrines.<sup>12</sup>

But, however bad some of the results of perfect freedom in thought and worship may be, the effects of institutionalism have been worse. Though Bishop Gore is a zealous Anglo-Catholic and hopes to see the whole of Christendom united through the mediating position and service of his own Church, he is not blind to the dangers of an all-powerful ecclesiasticism. He writes:

Highly organized institutionalism degenerates into a tyranny in the hands of ecclesiastical authorities—such a tyranny as our Lord found opposed to him in the persons of the scribes and Pharisees. How he detested it we know; and we know also that the refusal of these authoritative persons to accept his challenge—the challenge of one whom they tried to despise as a mere layman—that they should start afresh and think again what the religion which they professed and taught really meant—it was this refusal which was the main cause of the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus. Nevertheless, in spite of the tremendous warnings of the gospel against ecclesiastical obstinacy and tyranny, the same spirit has sadly often reappeared in the history of the Church. Religious authority has exalted the virtue of passive obedience as if it were the main quality of faith. It has paid scant regard to

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<sup>12</sup> "Faith of Our Fathers," p. 87. John Murphy Company.

the individual conscience. In face of a new science, it has become obscurantist. It has been responsible for a lamentable series of ecclesiastical forgeries. It has crushed prophets. It has laid so much insistence on prescribed ecclesiastical observances as to go some way toward turning sacraments into charms. Perhaps it is not necessary that I should dwell at greater length upon the dangers which arise to religion where institutionalism is supreme and legitimate authority in the Church, by a one-sided development, becomes a despotism which will not allow itself to be criticized or questioned from within. Such tyranny has appeared in the Western Catholic Church and in the Orthodox East, and under established Calvinism or Independency. As we all know, it is a prominent ugly feature on the face of Church history, and where it occurs it is the cause of violent reactions which, if they cannot be put down by persecution, subsist and lead good men and women out of the fellowship of the Church—men and women such as would have welcomed Jesus in the days of his flesh.<sup>13</sup>

In view of the record which history presents, we may well conclude that it is not best for the whole Christian Church to be organized under one head. This is Gardner's opinion, expressed as follows:

It is obvious that, in speaking of the Church, I am not meaning to confine the term to any particular branch of it. *Ubi Christus ibi Ecclesia*. The Articles define the Church as a "congregation of faithful men in the which the pure word of God is preached and the Sacraments duly administered." The various Churches of Christendom, Eastern, Roman, and Reformed, each embody some side of the Christian inspiration, and, alas! all mix that inspiration with much that is unworthy and impure. In my opinion, any outward and visible union between them is almost impossible; and it may even be doubted whether it is desirable, for varieties of organization and ritual suit various contries and temperaments. An outwardly united Church, as we see from the history of the Middle Ages, is in great danger of degeneration; the various organizations in it keep the blood flowing. Intercourse and combination for

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<sup>13</sup> "Can We Then Believe?" p. 130. Scribner's,

Christian purposes between branches of the Church are much to be desired: the rule of the whole by any curia or committee is hardly to be wished for. The unity of what is Christlike in all the visible Churches in one invisible Church is far more in accord with the spirit of the Founder.<sup>14</sup>

However, the tendency of scientific religion is to unite rather than to divide. Instead of basing religion upon an authority which many refuse to recognize and have good reason for resenting, it aims to establish an authority that no one can deny—the authority of experienced and demonstrable truth. Before the sailors of the ancient world had circumnavigated the globe, it was possible to dispute over what was on the other side or whether there was any other side; but when a company of modern tourists land on the shore of China, it is obvious to every person alike that the land is as it is. So long as the truths of religion are regarded as mysteries which can be known only through a miraculously constituted authority or as speculative tenets which lie beyond the range of experience, there will be room for doubt and endless disputation; but when the facts of religion become accessible to all men alike, those who actually observe and experience them are no more likely to dispute over them than a group of men who see the light and feel the warmth of the sun are likely to argue whether the king of day is really shining in the heavens. Religious truth is not just what any man may happen to think, but what all will sooner or later arrive at through observation and experience. What is convincing to one must, if it is really true, finally prove convincing to all. Macintosh says:

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<sup>14</sup> "The Practical Basis of Christian Belief," p. 273. Scribner's.

It is the divine as revealed to the individual that has rightful authority over the individual rather than the mere outcome of some other individual's having been inspired by a religious experience of his own. In other words, as in logic and in morals, the ultimate authority is objective without being purely external and internal without being purely subjective. We are not obliged to infer, to decide, or to respond religiously, save as our own reason, our own conscience, or our own religious nature finds what appeals to it as logical, or right, or divine. But on the other hand, we ought not to feel free to infer, to decide, or to respond religiously just as we please without regard to logic, or moral principle, or revelation. It is not our own empirical self, whatever it may chance to be, that is the valid authority, but the universally valid, when we come to be conscious of it as such. It has rightful authority over us, because, when we realize its true value, we feel and know that we cannot be true to the best that is in us, or realize our highest possible ideal, if we fail to respond to its appeal.<sup>15</sup>

Authoritative religion arose in a time when all authority was imposed from without. It belonged to an age which recognized the divine right of kings and flourished before the principle of democracy began to affect the thought of the world. The king could do no wrong in civil government, and the head of the Church could do no wrong in the religious realm. The people had no voice in making the laws of state or in determining doctrinal forms or modes of worship. The body of truth was revealed directly from heaven through a miraculously constituted medium and imposed upon a public which had neither the ability nor the right to question its certainty. Jesus Christ ordained the apostles, and the apostles established the Church, which, as "holy" and belonging to the heavenly order, has the right to announce the decrees of heaven to the world, which is either so

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<sup>15</sup> "Theology as an Empirical Science," p. 110. Macmillan.

material, or so benighted, or so utterly wicked that it cannot pass judgment upon that which is presented. Since judgment and conscience are not to be trusted, the whole fabric of divine truth can only be received as revealed mysteries.

It may be said in passing, however, that there is no expectation of getting rid of mysteries. The atom contains all the mystery of being. The primrose can never become just a primrose and nothing more. All nature is symbolic, as Newman saw. But it is the *manufactured* mystery that provokes objection from science—the demand upon the part of the Church that unreasonable doctrines be accepted as mysteries, just because the Church has divine authority to declare what must be believed. The universe contains enough mysteries without manufacturing them to order. The mystery of baptismal regeneration and transubstantiation is no more like the real mystery of the genesis and growth of spiritual life than a wax flower is like the lily of the valley.

Scientific religion formulates its doctrines and principles from the world-wide experience of God. It is made possible through the moral and spiritual capacity of the human race. Man is born into the world neither totally depraved nor “trailing clouds of glory,” but potentially a moral being, capable of having fellowship with God and acquiring a moral character. Religion as it has been lived and experienced is the expression of the thoughts and aspirations of the human heart, as it has felt the impress of the divine and endeavored to attain to a life worthy of the dignity of a being whom God acknowledges as a friend and child. But error everywhere attends the experience of man, and progress in knowledge of any

kind depends upon its elimination through study and observation. Religion is not an exception. Says Percy Gardner:

If any communion between God and man be possible, it must be the subject of investigation; and the true in regard to it must be separated from the false. And we may take this course without any fear. For if such communication were not a real thing, a belief in it could not have persisted with such indomitable energy through all the ages. It has, however, been always and everywhere overlaid with a mass of false or at least disputable theory, from the burden of which it must be freed. But the burden must be lifted with the utmost care and reverence. The wheat and the tares grow together, and we have to be very careful not to root up both together.<sup>16</sup>

The religious experience of prophets and apostles is understandable and reproducible. Whitehead says that the Bible is by far the most complete account of the coming of rationalism into religion. Bible religion is rational—not in the sense that it is an intellectual fabrication, but in the sense that it expects response from man as a reasonable being. The prophets appealed from tribal custom to direct ethical intuition. “The individual became the religious unit in the place of the community; the tribal dance lost its importance compared to the individual prayer; and for the few the individual prayer merged into justification through individual insight.” Scientific religion takes it for granted that the experience of God, which came to men of Bible times, is possible for any man who will meet the conditions. The law is thus stated by Macintosh:

A dependable religious experience is what we ought to

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<sup>16</sup> “The Practical Basis of Christian Belief,” p. 16. Scribner’s.

expect of a dependable religious Reality, when we discover and practice the right religious adjustment. And whatever else that responding Reality may be, it is at once an existent Factor and the God of experimental religion. It seems to be what Christianity has meant, essentially, by the "Holy Spirit." The existence and revelation of this God may not be universally verified; but the claim is made with a challenge to investigation, that it is universally verifiable. And the verifiable fact, it should be noted, is not simply a fact of subjective religious experience, a fact of the psychology of religion; it is a fact statable in terms of what a real Factor can be depended upon for, and as such it is a verifiable fact of religious knowledge, of theology. Even if everything else in our thought of God were to remain mere postulate and theory, this at least would be scientific fact and enough to make empirical theology, in germ at least, truly scientific.<sup>17</sup>

Thus the elements of scientific religion are available on every hand. There is a vast accumulation of facts which may be used in formulating laws and theories, and the work must be done, if religion is to hold its place of primacy among the interests and serious pursuits of life. The truths of religion do not come through the simple and easy method of opening the mouth that God may fill it—through the miraculously appointed representative of the court of heaven; nor do they fall like dew upon the devout worshippers at a prayer meeting. Religious knowledge, like all other knowledge, comes through a patient use of the material furnished through experience. It is as Streeter says:

What a man knows of the inner quality of life depends primarily upon three things: first, the depth and the range of his own personal experience; secondly, how far he has the

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<sup>17</sup> "The Reasonableness of Christianity," p. 126. Scribner's.



imaginative sympathy to penetrate into the inner experience of others; thirdly, the extent to which he has reflected on the material so presented. Of these, personal experience is the first requisite, but alone it is not enough. For "most people," it has been said, "are ignorant, in spite of experience." Wisdom and insight come, not from the number of things done, or the poignancy of things felt, but from depth and quality of after-reflection on them.<sup>18</sup>

While Roman Catholicism derives its authoritativeness from its claim to the right of the Church to determine all beliefs and practices of religion, Protestantism, in so far as it has been authoritative, has depended upon the Bible. They are alike in that they both hold a theory of man which regards him as incapable of appreciating and appropriating truth without the support of an external prop of some kind. Authoritative religion was made necessary by the doctrine of total depravity. Catholicism taught that man was so incapable of true religious judgment that he had to rely upon the Church for his assurance for truth and salvation, and when the Reformers undermined the authority of the Church, they were so distrustful of man's capacity for recognizing truth on its own merits that they hastened to put the Bible in the place of authority hitherto held by the Church. The world had not yet learned to appreciate the confidence that God has placed in man, or that Jesus placed in his disciples when he risked the whole future of the kingdom of heaven in their hands. The change that has come about in the conception of man's capacity for religion is thus stated by Rufus M. Jones:

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<sup>18</sup> "Reality," p. 36. By B. H. Streeter. Macmillan.

The sixteenth century, with its humanist teachers and its spiritual reformers, saw a strong and widespread reaction against the dogmatic theory of man's corruption and depravity. The testimony of the mystics to the presence of God within was strengthened now by a great cloud of witnesses, though even yet there was no one who had hit upon a new basic psychological interpretation of man. The Quakers in the seventeenth century gave this message a new and powerful emphasis. In fact, they form the first organized body of Christians who built their entire faith upon the principle that something of God is present in every man. They broke completely with the Augustinian conception of man, raised in their time to a new stage of importance by John Calvin's impressive interpretation of it. Their famous phrase was the "inner Light," or the "divine Seed," which they set over against the Calvinistic view of man, who was thought of as totally corrupt and beginning life handicapped by the inheritance of seeds of sin implanted in the soul. Quakerism, in its historical significance, can be rightly understood only as a profound revolt against the Calvinistic interpretation of man.<sup>19</sup>

A distinction must be made between absolute and relative authority. Every man who has mastered a subject is an authority in his field. The experts in faith, whose experiences are recorded in the Bible, possess an authority in religion. The Church, with its wide observation, prolonged experience, and careful thought, is a relative authority. But the only absolute authority is God. The authority of the Bible lies in its truth, which is the truth of God. The book comes recommended by the relative authority of the Church and the enormous influence which it has exerted upon the world's religious life. The whole Church declares with united voice that the Bible is a well of truth and an indispensable aid to Christian experience. But it was the Church that made up the

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<sup>19</sup> "Religious Foundations," p. 33. Macmillan.

canon of Holy Scripture. The Church decided what books should be let in and what should be kept out. And each book was selected with good reason. Even the Song of Solomon, which has often been depreciated, has come to be recognized as of great value in portraying the pure love of one true girl for her mountain lover in an age of polygamy and conjugal infidelity. But the Bible was selected by the Church, and its authority must lie either in the Church or in its truth. The Bible writers themselves place the authority in the truth which they utter and not in a book or an ecclesiastical organization, and they expect the readers to recognize the truth for themselves. "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him," says the proverb. And then the writer immediately reverses with, "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit." What does he mean? He advises the reader to use his own judgment, implying that, whichever he does, he will probably wish he had done the other. A fool is a difficult person to get along with in any case. The fact that a statement is found in the Bible, which is recommended by the Church, creates a strong presumption in its favor; but absolutely truth is truth, and a statement which is certainly and unmistakably true has no more absolute authority when found in the Bible than when found elsewhere. The Bible is true just because it is true and not because the Church says it is. The truths of religion are not true because they are found in the Bible; they are in the Bible because they are true.

While Roman Catholicism is consistently and persistently authoritative, demanding unquestioning

submission to the head of the Church, Protestantism has wavered between authoritative and scientific religion. The Catholic is ready with his answer when the question is raised, Who guarantees the Bible? The Church, of course. But the Protestant has no infallible organization which can assure him that the Bible is true. He must fall back upon the impression which the content of the book makes upon his religious consciousness for his assurance. And this transfers the seat of authority from the outside to the inside and places it within the consciousness, where God and the human soul stand face to face with each other. The purpose of the Bible in telling men of God is to lead them to God. Faith in the book, or in the men who wrote it, or in the Church which indorses it, must not be made a substitute for faith in God. Gardner shows how the soul of man has been driven from one position to another till at last it finds refuge in God alone:

In the Middle Ages men drew a hard-and-fast line. Knowledge in regard to the world of sense, they held, man could gain by the exercise of his natural powers. But knowledge in regard to the unseen world of spirit, and with knowledge due and suitable action in regard to it, they thought could only be gained through revelation. And the revelation they supposed to be embodied in a book, or in an organized Church. All that man's intellect could do was to discover the dictates of that book, or that Church, after which his intellect and his will alike were bound to accept such dictation. But when once criticism fairly set about the task of considering the nature of inspiration and of revelation, this easy resort to an infallible guide became impossible. At the time of the Reformation it was clear to the peoples of northern Europe that many of the teachings and much of the practice of the Church which claimed to be infallible were contrary to the light of intelligence and the voice of conscience. For a time the reformers intrenched

themselves behind the refuge of an infallible Bible. But when historic and literary criticism had passed its most rudimentary stage, it became obvious that a book so complex and so wanting in self-consistence could not be infallible—that, in fact, it was not one book, but a literature. Thenceforward the spirit of man was driven from all shelters into the open sea and was obliged, willing or unwilling, to go forward.<sup>20</sup>

Thus religion in recent times has been thrust out from the sheltered nook of a benevolent, but tyrannical, ecclesiasticism, and from the charted channel of proof-texts into the wide sea of the race's experience of God. The winds are blowing and the waves are high, but the polestar continues to shine. The change is no doubt great. But there is no cause for alarm. God is God, religious experience is a fact, and honest effort to learn the ways of God and do his will will have its reward. The Church actually has no less authority than it has always had. Men have only discovered that it has not the authority that it claimed and that it really thought it possessed. The Bible is the same book it always was. It has only been learned through more careful study and better facilities for study that the Bible does not possess or claim for itself the kind of authority that some men have claimed for it. The present position with all its uneasiness is better than any former position by so much as it is closer to truth. It is not a loss to learn that the Church was never commissioned to tyrannize over men's consciences, but to preach the gospel; or that the Bible is not an infallible authority upon all subjects, but a manifold record of God's revelation of himself in the human

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<sup>20</sup> "The Practical Basis of Christian Belief," p. 68. Scribner's.

experience of salvation. Not a single fact of religion has been destroyed, nor has the reality of communion between God and man lost any of its significance. The appeal to fact is presented by Gardner as follows:

At the bottom the whole question is one of fact and experience. We have the facts of religion working in the world about us. And we have a series of biographies of all periods in the history of the Church. There is an enormous consensus of testimony. Thousands have testified that when their own powers of action were exhausted they have been aided and sustained by a spiritual power working in them, raised from despair to hope, from feebleness to efficiency, from pessimism to a free and joyous activity. They have thrown themselves into the river of spirit, sometimes doubting whether they would ever come to the surface; and they have found themselves borne up and carried onward to ends which seemed beyond their attainment, very often to ends which they had not seen or anticipated. The venture of faith has been justified. Of course, one could not say that this is always the case in the world, though some will say that this is always the case in their own experience. There is risk which has to be incurred; otherwise faith would have in it little merit. And so poor is the courage and the will of man that, however clear may be the recollection of past aid, it yet always does require some strain to put the matter to the proof again. Jesus said, "Everyone that asketh receiveth"; but men have not recognized his word, because they have not recognized the spiritual aid, unless it has carried them exactly the way they wished to go. God will certainly not be dictated to. But the possibility and the actuality of divine aid seems to me as well established by history as any of the regular phenomena of the moral constitution of things. And it takes place not only in the great crises of life, but in the small events of every day.<sup>21</sup>

Authoritative religion, as represented by Roman Catholicism, has been here a long time, and scientific

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<sup>21</sup> "The Practical Basis of Christian Belief," p. 70. Scribner's.

religion has come to stay. The former will endure so long as millions prefer to have their religious thinking done for them, and the latter will be necessary so long as earnest minds demand the right to gain their knowledge at first hand. But the position of a religion half-slave and half-free will become more and more difficult to maintain. Dr. Orchard is so far right that a Protestantism based upon authority will continue to suffer attrition from the onslaughts of Catholicism on the one hand and from atheism on the other. But a Protestantism which is earnestly bent upon a reality in religion as certain and practicable as the discoveries and inventions of science will command the respect and gain the support of the great majority of thinking people, as well as of the earnest masses of every land. Those who have tasted the liberty gained through the Reformation cannot go back into the house of religious bondage; neither can they endure a petty tyranny of innumerable minor ecclesiasticisms. Their only course is to carry the Reformation to its logical consummation in a scientific religion. The course that Protestantism must take is pointed out by Dr. W. P. Merrill in a recent article on "Protestantism at the Crossroads," in which he says:

There is ample room to-day, there will be ample room for many years ahead, for a genuinely "Catholic" Church and for a genuinely "Protestant" Church; for a "religion of authority" and a "religion of the spirit." There is little room to-day and there will be less and less room, for a church which tries to serve two masters, which professes to trust in the spirit, but still clings to the emblems and methods and assumptions of external authority, afraid in its heart to let them go and

really to live its life and do its work "not by might, nor by craft, but by spirit."<sup>22</sup>

In any case, the individual must use his reason to discover the authority which he is willing to acknowledge. Authoritative religion presents miracles and prophecy as its credentials, while scientific religion relies upon the *quality* of its truth. In ancient times miracles were not scrutinized, and earlier events were easily taken as prophecies of later similar happenings. But in the thought of the modern world miracles and prophecy have become less certain than the truth which they are supposed to guarantee, because of the difficulties of evidence. Since it has become more difficult to prove a miracle than to recognize moral and spiritual truth, miracles have lost their apologetic value. We may wonder whether Elijah called down fire from heaven, but we are very sure that when he stood face to face with Ahab in Naboth's vineyard he uttered the truth of God. But, even if every miracle in the Bible and in Church history could be proved beyond the shadow of a doubt, it would still remain a fact that the greatest realities in the universe are not might and intelligence, but *goodness* and *love*. God is not revealed so much by men who have been able to change the course of nature or to look into the future and tell in advance what would take place as by men who have reproduced his spirit of goodness, mercy, and love. In the article already referred to Dr. Merrill says:

Protestantism has held too much to the Catholic idea that *God is found best in the unusual* and the extraordinary. "Would you be surest of God? Watch for a miracle!" We

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<sup>22</sup> *World's Work*, February, 1924.



cling to the magic of sacramentarianism, or obstinately defend the divinity of the inexplicable; we say, "No miracle, no God." Only we put all our miracles back nineteen hundred years or more. The Catholic is more consistent. His God works miracles now. Here also Protestantism too often insists on the same faith, but in diluted form.

Forsyth, although he firmly believed in miracles, declared that "the evidential value of miracles is quite gone." The mere fact that a miracle is recorded in the Bible, as historical criticism has shown, cannot always be taken as sufficient evidence of the actuality of the event. Each particular miracle is a question of history and must be established by historical evidence. But proof is so difficult that it is easier to substantiate the moral and spiritual truth of the Bible by a direct appeal to the moral sense than it is to convince the doubter that the miracle which is supposed to guarantee the truth of the Bible and the Church actually occurred. These difficulties are thus presented by Macintosh:

Moreover, in appealing to miracle stories as evidence of the truth of Christianity, the older apologetic has never been able to get quite away from the fallacy of reasoning in a circle. Protestants readily detect this fallacy in the Catholic apologetic. The Roman Church is the true Church, it is maintained, and its doctrines ought to be accepted as true, because Christ declared, according to the Bible, that the "gates of hell"—heresy, for example—should never prevail against the Church founded upon the apostle Peter, by which, it is assumed, was meant the Roman Church. And when it is asked why we ought to believe that this is what the Bible really teaches, and that what the Bible teaches is true we are met with the statement that the infallible Church has decided that this is what the Bible teaches and that what the Church says the Bible teaches is infallibly true. This process of making the infallibility of the Bible depend upon the infallibility of the Church, and the

infallibility of the Church upon the infallibility of the Bible, instead of finding some sure independent support for one or the other, must lead eventually, in minds that think logically, to the collapse of this particular type of traditionalistic faith. As well might one expect a superstructure to be the basis of its own foundation. An identical criticism might be made against the argument that the Catholic Church is shown to be the true and authoritative Church by the genuineness of certain ecclesiastical miracles, and that this genuineness is certified by the infallible Church. The fallaciousness of such circular reasoning in Catholic apologetics the old-school Protestant theologian has clearly seen; but he has been curiously blind to the fact that there is implicit in his own apologetic a similar fallacious circle. He may—and generally does—avoid an explicit statement of the fallacy; but there is no getting away from the fact that the real reason why he accepts the Biblical miracles as historical and as due to divine intervention is that he finds the account of them in the Bible. So then, when in his apologetic he appeals to these same miracle stories as accrediting the divine inspiration and infallibility of the Bible, he too is virtually reasoning in a circle. It is no more logical for the Protestant to believe the Bible because of the Biblical miracles and the Biblical miracles because of the Bible than it is for the Catholic to believe the Church because of the Bible and the Bible because of the Church, or the Church because of ecclesiastical miracles and ecclesiastical miracles because of the Church.<sup>23</sup>

Protestantism as authoritative religion faces another dilemma. For the Roman Catholic, the creeds are fixed, final, and infallible, and the authority by which they are established is greater than any other authority. Consequently, he denies the right of reason to examine them and refuses to enter into any controversy concerning them. If they seem to be contradicted by a discovery of fact, he simply rejects the fact or denies that it has any bearing upon the

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<sup>23</sup> "The Reasonableness of Christianity," p. 4. Scribner's.

subject. But the Protestant was compelled to appeal to reason to establish his claim over against Catholicism, and to acknowledge that his creeds and confessions were not infallible. Therefore, in the face of advancing discoveries he must either deny that his creed has been affected by the discoveries which seem to contradict it, and thus break his connection with the thought of his day, or he must suffer his creed to be diminished little by little, always in fear that the whole of it may eventually be destroyed. That is to say, if his religious belief is no more than a precious deposit contained in an authoritative creed, it will contain less and less, as science renders one statement after another untenable. On the other hand, as Macintosh says, scientific religion increases its store of knowledge continually, because its beliefs grow out of an experience which is enlarging all the time. The traditionalist may well become alarmed, because as his system is whittled away he can never tell where the destructive process is going to stop, but he who holds fellowship with the living God knows that his store of truth will remain and increase as long as religious experience continues.

We are living in an unusual time. Theological reconstruction is now going on more rapidly than at any other period in history. Some timid souls lose confidence and fall back on Rome. Others cling blindly and obstinately to tradition, fearing that the yielding of an inch will mean that at last the whole structure will be swept away. "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." "Away with such a fellow from the earth." But serious students see the situation and move on. They know that religion is not being

destroyed. The Church is moving away from an authority that cannot compel respect to an authority that none can deny, for when religion becomes thoroughly scientific, it will be in such close touch with reality that all will recognize its power. The Church as it will then be is thus described by Dr. Lee:

When authority is wielded from the throne of religious fact rather than from the dogma woven round the fact, it will be felt and accepted as the voice of God himself. Have the institutions built by the scientific method on facts other than the religious no authority? Have the electrical engineers no authority? Not, perhaps, from their mere untested theories, but as representing a great and world-wide physical force they have authority as emphatic as lightning. Christ spoke from the standpoint of divine reality and fact. When he arraigned the scribes and Pharisees, describing them as whited sepulchers, as serpents, as a generation of vipers, filling up the measure of the fathers and finding their destiny end in the damnation of hell, do you suppose he spoke without authority? Not in all history was such language ever before or since used to burn up the pretense and hollow professions of a class of men. Let no one ever suppose that when theology is constructed by the scientific method in harmony with spiritual fact the Church will lose its authority. When that day comes the Church will have more authority than all other institutions on earth, as it ought to have, because, then, it will be in real fact the body of Christ and in direct touch with all power in heaven and in earth, as Christ, the Head, is. The ministers will then be in the realm of religion what the engineers are in the realm of electricity. There will be popes and cardinals and bishops just as there are now, for the fortunes of the Church must be administered and directed, but the ecclesiastical establishments will not be meeting places in which saints may sleep and dream about heaven, but vast power houses in which the colaborers with God will meet to generate light to show lost multitudes the way to heaven.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> "The Religion of Science," page 53. Revell.

Religion has always been in a measure scientific. Every great expression of faith or system of worship grew out of the experience of somebody. The religion of Israel was colored and directed by what Moses learned of God; Buddha preached the eightfold path which he had traveled in his own experience; the moral and religious principles of Zoroaster came through the travail of his soul; Mohammedanism was born in the heart of the prophet as he meditated upon life's problems in the cave. Christianity has behind it the experience of Jesus as he knew God, and of Paul as he learned Jesus as Saviour. The great creative spirits in religion had contact with reality and reported what they saw. They were scientific in the sense that they dealt primarily with facts and not with mere fancy or speculation. Macintosh writes:

Throughout the history of religion, man has been using the experimental method of trying to discover or have a revelation of God. As in all empirical investigation, progress is made by elimination of unsuccessful adjustments; it is the trial and error method. And while through wrong religious adjustment the experience has often been negative, it is nevertheless true that the religious man has been achieving a gradually progressive knowledge of the existence and nature of God. This achievement of critical common sense in religion is comparable to the pre-scientific knowledge gained by critical common sense through experience of the world and reflection on what has been experienced.<sup>24</sup>

Even in Roman Catholicism, there is the experience of Peter, his successors, the hierarchy, and the councils. The conciliar decrees came through the exercise of the judgment of the majority of the men

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<sup>25</sup> "The Reasonableness of Christianity," p. 229. Scribner's,

who composed the official body, and papal bulls express the convictions of the pope who issues them. It is the experience of the few for the many, or of one living man over against the total experience of the Church, or the race. But the experience, thus limited, is carefully guarded, and so far every effort to extend it has been suppressed. At the beginning of this century there was in the Catholic Church a movement which aimed to establish a *modus vivendi* through which science might flourish unhampered along with religion, but it was rigidly suppressed; and for two decades not a ripple has appeared upon the surface, whatever might have been going on within the depths. That Church seems determined that valid religious experience shall be confined to the pope. What has taken place in recent years is thus stated by Gardner:

The Modernists accepted the claim of the Roman Curia to infallibility in the matter of doctrine, or dogma as they preferred to call it. The Church, they held, had a right of divine origin to form organization, to prescribe rites and ceremonies, and even to establish dogmas in regard to moral and spiritual truth. But in matters of history it had no right by authority to impose on the faithful any particular view. The history recorded in the Bible, and the history of the Church, must be judged in the light of recognized canons of historic research. The distinction is luminous, and it has been put forth with remarkable lucidity by M. Loisy. Unfortunately the Roman Church would not, and in fact could not, accept it; the Church claimed the right to fix and to interpret religious history just as clearly as it claimed the right to formulate doctrine. And, indeed, to draw a sharp line between dogma and the history of doctrine Rome held to be impossible. Moreover, it is clear that if once we apply our critical faculties in the field of religious history, we must needs apply them also in the field

of religious psychology, and so, in fact, to the very basis of all doctrine.<sup>26</sup>

And the faithful love to have it so. Cardinal Gibbons draws a beautiful picture of the harmony which prevails within the Catholic fold:

What more beautiful or fitting illustration of unity can we have than that which is suggested by a sheepfold? All the sheep of a flock cling together. If they are momentarily separated, they are impatient till reunited. They follow in the same path. They feed on the same pastures. They obey the same shepherd and fly from the voice of strangers. So did our Lord intend that all the sheep of his fold should be nourished by the same sacraments and the same bread of life; that they should follow the same rule of faith as their guide to heaven; that they should listen to the voice of one Chief Pastor, and that they should carefully shun false teachers.<sup>27</sup>

Only, people are not sheep. And no human being can differ from all other human beings as the shepherd differs from his sheep.

It happens that Roman Catholic scholars are now writing freely upon the scientific questions of the day, while some Protestant thinkers are being annoyed by ecclesiastical interference. But such freedom is by the grace of the pope, who may decide any day that the discussion must stop. On the other hand, conventions and assemblies may protest, but they cannot suppress. Some denominations have been attempting to dictate the attitude of the teachers in their educational institutions toward scientific questions; but the principle of academic

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<sup>26</sup> "The Practical Basis of Christian Belief," p. 97. Scribner's.

<sup>27</sup> "Faith of Our Fathers," p. 7. John Murphy Company.

freedom has become so widely recognized and so thoroughly established in the field of education that no Church can refuse to grant it without seriously damaging its educational work. But "Catholic education" is different from all other education in that it frankly acknowledges that its policy is to keep all scholars subservient to the infallible dogmas of the Church. Cardinal Newman recognized the limitations of scholarship in the Roman Catholic Church when he wrote:

It has the prerogative of an indirect jurisdiction on subject-matters which lie beyond its own proper limits. . . . The Catholic Church claims not only to judge infallibly on religious questions, but to animadvert on opinions in secular matters which bear on religion, on matters of philosophy, of science, of literature, of history, and demands our submission to her claim. It claims to censure books, to silence authors, and to forbid discussions. It must of course be obeyed without a word.<sup>28</sup>

The great Protestant creeds came through the experience of the men who made them, and they come with a weight of relative authority, because they were wrought out of trying situations with patience and care. But they cannot be placed over against the total religious experience, for that would be putting a part for the whole. They command our respect, as Dr. Lee says, but we honor them most in doing for our day and time what they did for theirs.

The fathers are entitled to great honor and respect for the religious establishments they reared in their day, but to credit them with sufficient insight and enterprise to build in their time a theological chamber large enough to hold all the knowl-

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<sup>28</sup> Quoted by Dean Inge in *Modern Churchman*, September, 1925.



edge the human race should ever learn in all ages about the facts of God and man is to heap more glory upon them than they deserve. Those of us who live to-day know perfectly well that God and man are both just as much alive this moment as they were in the sixteenth century. Not only are they alive to-day, but they have been acting and reacting, the one upon the other, ever since the fathers formulated their theories from the study of the religious facts five hundred years ago. And we may add that the same spiritual facts the fathers considered are the ones we face. They are with us, too, under conditions political, commercial, and world-wide—totally different from such as the fathers knew. We can hardly believe that Augustine and Calvin and Arminius exhausted all the heights and depths and resources of religious facts any more than we can believe that Ptolemy and Copernicus and Newton exhausted all the resources of astronomical facts.<sup>29</sup>

We believe that God is in the Church, that he has always been in it, and that he will remain with it to the end of time. There is no official medium which may claim to be God's exclusive mouthpiece, but every earnest soul may dare to make its contribution to the total Church life. Macintosh thus states the law through obedience to which any congregation may receive divine direction in its thought and action:

Among the most important of the ecclesiastical-social laws of theology are the law of the divine guidance of the Church and the law of the (divinely given) assurance of being a true Church. The former may be put thus: On condition of such a cultivation of the right religious adjustment in the church-meeting that the individual members are brought by the Holy Spirit into a Christian state of willingness to do what is eternally right and for the greatest good of mankind, they will in this way have been brought by the Divine Spirit, other conditions being equal, into the best possible frame of mind for coming to a correct decision as to what they ought to do. The law of ecclesiastical assurance would be to the

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<sup>29</sup> "The Religion of Science," p. 43. Revell.

effect that when a Church, through persisting as a Church in the right religious adjustment, is brought by the Holy Spirit into the normal Christian condition of health and efficiency, it will tend to be sufficiently assured that it is essentially Christian in character, or in other words, that it is one of the true churches of God, or of Jesus Christ.<sup>30</sup>

Religion has always meant to be scientific. In every age men have used observation in enriching and interpreting their experience of God. They have hit upon the best analogy available for expressing the divine nature and character. In ancient times the most obvious figure was the Oriental despot, arbitrary in the exercise of absolute power and yet benevolent, with reward for his obedient subjects and hatred and destruction for his enemies. Another analogy was presented in the civil judge. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Slowly and surely the religious consciousness moved toward the analogy of fatherhood, until it reached its perfect expression in the gospel of Jesus Christ. These human relations and experiences are real life; the experience of communion with God is also real; and religion has endeavored to develop its doctrines, ceremonies, and rules of conduct while in close touch with reality.

Whatever may have been the beginning of religion, it arose out of real life. It came through the hopes and fears of actual experience. Browne and others place the origin of religion in the sense of fear. It is more likely, however, to have arisen from a desire to know the powers above the world and to enter into communion with them. There is a universal heart hunger for God. Sacrifice originally meant communion rather than propitiation. It was a crude effort

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<sup>30</sup> "Theology as an Empirical Science," p. 155. Macmillan.

to share with the tribal god the good things of life. Men are not naturally cowards. They do not cringe before wild beasts, or savage tribes, or the forces of nature. Bravery is a universal trait. The marvel is not that men have sought cowardly peace, but that they have gone to war upon the slightest pretext and, once in, have fought until strength and resources were exhausted.

The morality which has always accompanied religion and depended upon it for sanction has been developed scientifically. The basic principle is to avoid that which harms and appropriate that which helps. Sorley says:

Morality is not something that has descended out of heaven in perfect and final form. Like everything else that exists, it is a development, the successive stages of which admit of being traced historically. By morality we mean the conduct, character, and ideas of men in their relation to goodness; and these have grown in precision and in system with the growth of the human mind and the changes of its environment.<sup>31</sup>

The fundamental conception underlying *taboo* is that man in this world is not completely at home. He is not the proprietor, and it would be wrong for him to act as if he were. Some things belong especially to God, and it is *dangerous* to put them to common uses. The things that were *taboo* had to be discovered through the "trial and error" method. The savage finds a tree and eats of the fruit. If it nourishes him, he eats again; it is permitted fruit. He eats of another tree and becomes wretchedly sick. He eats of it no more—it is *taboo*. In some cases

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<sup>31</sup> "Moral Values and the Idea of God," p. 67. By W. R. Sorley. Macmillan.

there is real reason for the *taboo*, while in others the article was prohibited through an accidental occurrence, but the motive is always to avoid that which would cause harm. The reason for some customs is lost in the obscure past. Some moral principles are overloaded by tradition, others are interwoven with superstition; but there was some kind of reason for adopting each moral and religious practice.

The Mosaic law was an elaborate system for regulating the life of the people in accordance with the fundamental needs of living. There is a symbolic meaning in the ceremonial laws. In many instances the reason for regarding a thing as clean or unclean has been lost. Why was the pig considered unclean? The fact that it does not chew the cud seems hardly a sufficient reason. What may be considered certain is that at some time far back in the history of the people something occurred which seemed to give good cause for regarding the pig as forbidden food.

The ten commandments are the direct outgrowth of experience. Loyalty to God was the first law of the nation, as indeed it is of any people. The Sabbath rests upon the fundamental necessity for periodic rest from usual labor. The prohibitions against murder and stealing protect men in their rights of person and property. The law against adultery enforces the universally recognized principle of conjugal fidelity. So far as investigation has been able to go, it appears that the human race has always been largely monogamic. The permanent attachment between husband and wife seems to be the basic bond of society. "This much is certain," writes Le Roy, "that nowhere in Africa do we see traces of this

promiscuity to-day—except in the great steppes of the eastern and southern zones, among herds of antelopes.” Disregard for the marriage vow and the tendency to change companions upon impulse and whim are signs of degeneracy produced by the self-indulgence of a luxurious civilization.

“Morality,” wrote Butler, “is the nature of things”; and it is endangered by nothing more than the notion that its laws are arbitrarily imposed by the deity, or by a book, or by a priesthood in the name of religion. Moral principles are in the nature of constitutional law—that is, they are written in the very nature of the human constitution, and the violation of them works inevitable injury. God does not arbitrarily select a code and reveal it through authorized agents who have the right to demand obedience. He reveals through experience the principles of well-being, which are so native to man that he cannot disobey them without self-deterioration. Morality may also be imperiled by a theory of forgiveness which holds that the effect of immoral action may be arbitrarily removed, making it as if the wrong had never been committed. Morality is so real that there is no escape from the effects of immorality.

Religion with Jesus was wholly scientific. There was nothing fictitious, mechanical, or artificial in his teaching or conduct. He accorded to the religious leaders of the time the relative authority that the official representatives of religion must bear in any age. “Go show thyself to the priest.” But he never worshiped custom, and he respected tradition only in so far as it was still vital. Those traditions that had lost their meaning and become a dead weight

upon the religious consciousness he simply ignored. In regard to the attitude of Jesus toward the conservators of the sacred past, Streeter says:

Christ did *not* teach surrender to the will of man: least of all a docile submission to those men who claimed to be the guardians of a special revelation of the will of God for man. In his attitude to the religious authorities of the day Christ was a revolutionary. The notion that it is the duty of a religious man to accept uncriticized anything that the past has held venerable and sacred finds no support in him. Christ was conspicuously a critic of tradition. He was constantly condemning accepted conceptions of God, accepted canons of morality, and above all that ecclesiastical tradition by which the word of God, then as so often since, was made of none effect.<sup>32</sup>

Jesus would not allow the requirements of useless customs to scatter his force, and he was especially severe with those official teachers who shut up the door which leads into a life of simple fellowship with God, by multiplying meaningless ceremonies and overlooking the essential and obvious principles of human brotherhood. Streeter writes further:

His "churchmanship" consisted in an effort at all costs to reform and vitalize existing thought and usage, not in the endeavor to perpetuate and defend the *status quo*. Where no principle was involved he counseled the keeping of the law. "Go show thyself to the priest and offer for thy cleansing—" "Leave there thy gift before the altar." But if law or commentary stood in the way of humanity or freedom, he brushed them aside with the revolutionary dictum, "The Sabbath was made for man." In the Jewish theory Church and state were one; and in this state, organized as a Church, he was no anarchist. He did recognize, and ordinarily he obeyed, the legitimate authority of scribe and priest. But it is not for this obedience that he is known to history, but be-

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<sup>32</sup> "Reality," p. 196. By B. H. Streeter. Macmillan.

cause he *also* recognized that occasion may arise when the duty of rebellion has the higher claim. In the face of glaring abuses, he was not content merely to criticize in words. In driving out of the temple the vendors of sacrificial animals, he committed an outrage on a trade sanctioned by public opinion and by the authorities of both Church and state—that was why they crucified him. He stirred up a hornets' nest, and the hornets stung.<sup>33</sup>

The teachings of Jesus were the direct expression of his experience of God. He realized God as Father and pointed to the care of a human father as an analogy of the providence of God. "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your Heavenly Father give good things to them that ask him?" God's care of the lily was a true sign of a larger care. "If God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith!" It was all so simple, so real, so close to nature. There in plain view was the growing flower. All about him were people vexed and worried with daily care. He himself found rest and peace in the Life of life. "Come unto me." Jesus did not offer a theodicy. Evil was also a tremendous fact, not to be explained, but to be resisted. The problem of life was to be solved by living and not by explaining. The world has not yet found a better solution. L. P. Jacks says:

There are people who still imagine that something is to be gained by "reconciling the existence of evil with the goodness of God." For my part, I flatly refuse to recognize as God any being with whose "goodness" the existence of evil can be "reconciled." Such reconciliations can have but one effect—to dishonor God and to scandalize men whom he has made in

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<sup>33</sup> "Reality," p. 192. Macmillan.

his image. Let us think rather of evil as that with which no decent soul can ever be reconciled, and in our refusal to be reconciled with it let us learn to find a close point of contact between our own nature and God's.<sup>34</sup>

Jesus appealed to the capacity of all men for responding to God. He did not demand a recognition of his authority apart from the quality of the truth which he uttered. "Why do not ye yourselves judge that which is right?" "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

Jesus made love the fundamental principle of religion. The whole duty of man is to respond to, and share in, the love of God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength; and thy neighbor as thyself." He enlarged the meaning of neighbor, as he found the term in the ancient law, and made it include every man who may be in reach of a helping hand. He extended the word even to inclusion of personal and national enemies. Wieman thus daringly broadens the scope of love:

Jesus has described this neighbor for us in parables and other teachings in such a way that we can recognize him wherever we meet him. The neighbor whom we are to love is anyone who embodies, however unconsciously to himself, however overlaid with prejudice and passion, however perverted and misconstrued, that uniquely human impulse toward more abundant life which can only find fulfillment in the great community of love. Whoever is driven by a divine discontent that will not let him rest with any earthly good save only complete self-surrender to unbounded love is my neighbor. Whoever is made for love and is restless till he gives up all for love is my neighbor. Whoever is driven by the thrust of an impulse for fuller life into murder and robbery

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<sup>34</sup> "Religious Foundations," p. 117, Edited by Rufus M. Jones. Macmillan,



and cruelty and lust and vanity and self-aggrandizement, exploitation of the weak, and violence toward the strong, he is my neighbor, because that impulse for a fuller life can find the scope and power it seeks only in the great community of love. This purpose of God in every man, this nature which is made for love and for nothing else, which blindly gropes and inarticulately strives, knowing not that it is only love which can give it the amplitude it seeks, this is what is holy in every man. This is the divine spark in him. That he should be so made that he can never find peace until he goes and sells all that he has for love, this is what makes him lovable. And this is what makes him sinful. For sin is nothing else than missing the mark by failing to achieve that richest abundance of life which his nature craves. What we love in our neighbor, when in the depths of his wickedness, is his need of love and his latent capacity to love. For his sin lies just in this that he has missed the way of love, and so gropes and stumbles and cries in the night, and flings about in desperation until he finds that way, or else is lost forever.<sup>35</sup>

There is a profound reason for the love of enemies. It is the law of redemption from evil and strife. Non-resistance and humility are not pusillanimous qualities; they indicate a law of life as wide as the human race and as deep as the heart of God. In teaching them Jesus expressed and put into operation a principle which has been dimly felt and in a measure acted upon by many who have had experience of the love of God. Confucius taught the common-sense principle that good should be requited with good and evil with evil; but Lao-Tze said, "To them that are good I am good, and to them that are not good I am also good; thus all may get to be good." The law laid down by Jesus is that all men must love the unlovely until it becomes lovable. The object may

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<sup>35</sup> "Religious Experience and Scientific Method," p. 96, Macmillan.

not always be achieved, but there is absolutely no other way.

Jesus broke with the Pharisees on the ground of their superficiality or hypocrisy. In his work on "Jesus of Nazareth," Joseph Klausner tells why the Pharisees could not recognize Jesus as a true teacher. He associated with taxgatherers and sinners; he and his disciples paid little attention to fasting and even attended suppers and banquets; he treated lightly the Sabbath laws by healing on the holy day diseases that were not dangerous and allowed his disciples to work at threshing grain on the Sabbath by plucking wheat heads and rubbing them in their hands; he was indifferent to ceremonial cleansing and did not insist that his disciples observe the religious obligations of washing of hands. "Thus Jesus would not only abrogate fasting and decry the value of washing of hands in the 'tradition of the elders' or in current traditional teaching, but would even permit (though he does this warily and only by hints) the foods forbidden by the law of Moses. The breach between Jesus and the Pharisees was complete." But the reason given by Klausner for the refusal of the Pharisees to accept Jesus as the Great Teacher are just the reasons why we must. "Judaism," he says, "is not only religion, and it is not only ethics; it is the sum total of all the needs of the nation placed on a religious basis." In other words, Israel demanded a national Saviour, we a human. They looked for a Messiah who would glorify the nation; we look to Jesus as the Saviour of the world. The very qualities which led Israel to reject him lead us to welcome him as the universal Saviour. Judaism

had become a communal religion, which related everything to the Jewish race, and thus it became impossible for it to fulfill its destiny in becoming the universal religion. Whitehead gives the difference between the social consciousness which accompanies a particular religion and the world-consciousness required by the universal religion:

Now, so far as concerns religion, the distinction of a world-consciousness as contrasted with a social consciousness is the change of emphasis in the concept of rightness. A social consciousness concerns people whom you know and love individually. Hence, rightness is mixed up with the notion of preservation. Conduct is right which will lead some god to protect you; and it is wrong if it stirs some irascible being to compass your destruction. Such religion is a branch of diplomacy. But a world-consciousness is more disengaged. It rises to a conception of an essential rightness of things. The individuals are indifferent, because unknown. The new, and almost profane, concept of the goodness of God replaces the older emphasis on the will of God. In a communal religion you study the will of God in order that he may preserve you; in a purified religion, rationalized under the influence of the world-concept, you study his goodness in order to be like him. It is the difference between the enemy you conciliate and the companion whom you imitate. A survey of religious history has disclosed that the coming of rational religion is the consequence of the growth of a world-consciousness. The later phases of the antecedent communal type of religion are dominated by the conscious reaction of human nature to the social organization in which it finds itself. Such reaction is partly emotion clothing itself in belief and ritual and partly reason justifying practice by the test of social preservation. Rational religion is the wider conscious reaction of men to the universe in which they find themselves.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> "Religion in the Making," p. 40. By A. N. Whitehead. Macmillan,

"Generality," Whitehead says, "is the salt of religion." It is the universalism of the prophets that makes their message permanently vital and keeps the Old Testament as fresh as the latest treatise on religion. They had to contend, over against the advocates of a religion of and for the Jew, for a religion for all mankind. When the time came for the great choice between a gospel for the elect nation and a gospel for the whole race, the leaders rejected the opportunity and made the great refusal. When Paul carried the gospel to the Gentiles, the Jews in most of the communities in which he preached said, "If the Gentiles come in, we go out." Is God the God of the Jew only? Is there not, in spite of all superficial differences and also some differences that are not so superficial, a common substratum of humanity which makes the whole world kin? Willard L. Sperry gives this reflection of a soldier of the late war, in a chapter on "What Shall We Think of Nature?"

A French *poilu* during the riven years just gone said that despite the hatred to the death which divided him from his enemy he could never escape the feeling that that which united them was more than that which divided them. For they both looked out upon the same poppies blowing in No-Man's Land, they were both warmed by the same sun, drenched by the same rains, chilled by the same snows, obscured by a common night, and renewed by a common dawn.<sup>37</sup>

Jesus aimed to lift religion out of its racial setting and place it upon the broad foundation of human need, aspiration, and experience of God. He had to struggle with narrow and obstinate leaders and even with the prejudices of his own disciples. "It is not

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<sup>37</sup> "Religious Foundations," p. 55. Edited by Rufus M. Jones. Macmillan.

meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs." That is what he knew the Pharisees would have said, and the disciples felt that such an attitude was justified. But the woman caught the twinkle in the eye of Jesus and countered, "Truth, Lord, but the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." He laid down principles that are universal and left rules of morality to be determined by conditions. "At bottom," says Macintosh, "Christian morality is essentially empirical; it judges conduct in the light of consequences." During the Parliament of Religions at the World's Fair in 1893, the one form of worship that proved acceptable to the representatives of all religions was the Lord's Prayer. Streeter remarks, "If a committee of students of Comparative Religion had set to work to compile a system, carefully selecting the best elements in each of the great religions, they might have reached something very like Christianity."

Jesus announced the principles of morality and religion almost casually and incidentally. He seemed to be amazingly careless concerning the fate of his precious utterances. He did not write them down or order them written. They seemed to be so native to the religious consciousness that they could not be lost. "I will be with you." "The Holy Spirit will bring to your remembrance" and "guide you into all truth." God will always be present; man is "incurably religious"; communion between the divine and human will never cease.

#### **IV**

### **THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD IN RELIGION**



## IV

### THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD IN RELIGION

WHEN we speak of scientific medicine, or law, or agriculture, or astronomy, there is a general understanding of what is meant. It is recognized that there is in each of these fields a definite body of knowledge which has been gained through a careful study of available facts. Through the application of a method to the phenomena of each particular branch of interest experts have been able to reduce it to a science. We know also what is meant by popular medicine, law, agriculture, or astronomy. By observing the facts of each field in a more or less haphazard way, the nonprofessional man accumulates opinions and rules of action, which may or may not be sound or hold good in practice.

We may speak confidently of scientific medicine. May we also speak of scientific religion? We have authoritative religion and popular religion. There is now, and there has always been, a great deal of both. May we have scientific religion, just as we have scientific medicine, scientific agriculture, and scientific astronomy? "Is it possible," asks Dr. Lee, "to build a theological system large and comprehensive enough to contain universally valid knowledge of the realities of religion? Do we know enough about religion to construct a science in which to house it? Has man become efficient and skillful enough in the use of the scientific method to employ it in the construction of a science to shelter his re-

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ligion? Are we in sight of the time when it will be possible to speak not only of the rocks of science and the plants of science, but also of the religion of science?"<sup>1</sup>

It is altogether a question of method. The difference between scientific medicine and popular medicine is produced by the way in which the data of disease and health are handled. In every science definite laws are arrived at through observation and experience. The scientists have built up a vast body of theoretical and practical knowledge through the use of the "trial and error" method. By the elimination of accidental accompaniments through repeated experiments, the valid laws of action are ascertained. In this way it is possible to determine the cause which produces a given effect.

A noted Englishman once remarked that "every man at forty is either a fool or a physician." By the time he reaches middle life each intelligent person has learned enough of his own constitution, the laws of hygiene, and the usual maladies and remedies to be able to take care of himself in ordinary indispositions. There are books on medicine giving directions for the nonprofessional treatment of trivial ailments. But in all serious trouble each man must call for the services of the scientifically trained physician, and in dangerous diseases the popular books follow the simple first aid directions with, "Then send for the doctor." In popular medicine, there are many traditional remedies which are not recognized by the physician, because there does not seem

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<sup>1</sup>"The Religion of Science," p. 28. By James W. Lee. Revell.

to be any connection between the remedy and the cure as cause and effect. Many have asserted, for instance, that rheumatism may be cured or avoided by carrying a potato in the pocket, but this treatment has not won scientific approval. The writer has removed warts from a boy's hands by touching them one at a time with a splinter and saying, "This wart will disappear." But the physicians pursue a more scientific method.

In newly settled countries justice is administered by rule of thumb. The magistrate disposes of difficult legal questions by using his common sense without confusing his mind by trying to find out what the law books say upon the subject. Even after the legal machinery has been thoroughly worked out and established, groups of men sometimes think that there is a quicker way to punish criminals than the technical process of courts of law, and night parties are organized to regulate the morals of the community. But this popular effort to mete out justice by lynching and mob law ignores the principles of liberty which have been ascertained through a struggle lasting over seven hundred years and disregards the body of legal knowledge which has been slowly acquired through the use of the scientific method. The rules of evidence which the court follows in securing and examining witnesses have been wrought out through long experience, and they are rigidly adhered to because they have proved to be the best method of procedure in establishing guilt or innocence. In the popular mind a confession of guilt is supposed to remove all doubt, and yet court records show many cases in which innocent men confessed crimes that they never committed. For

the protection of the individual and society it is necessary to demand that all efforts to suppress crime follow strictly the methods of scientific law.

The difference between popular farming and scientific agriculture has come out of the application of the scientific method to tilling the soil. When the country was new and there was a great deal of fresh land to be cleared, the farmer could wear out one piece of ground and then prepare another. He could plant his corn and potatoes "in the moon" and wherever the soil looked favorable to the growth of a certain kind of crop. But when the soil began to wear thin and fresh land was no longer available, it became necessary to study the composition of the soil and to give each piece of ground the lacking ingredient through a proper rotation of crops and scientific fertilization.

All human interests are being brought under the operation of ascertainable laws. All available facts in each field are collected, and then the principles which may be relied upon are inferred from them. In a word, living in the world is rapidly becoming scientific. Is religion an exception? Are we to be scientific in everything but religion? May not the application of the scientific method in religion prove as fruitful as its application to any other human interest? In the introduction of his book, which was written to show that religion may become as scientific as any other realm of experience and knowledge, Dr. Macintosh says:

In view, then, of the magnificent contribution of the physical, mental, and social sciences to human progress, the question here raised is as to whether religious knowledge may not eventually become scientific in the full, modern sense of the

word, or in other words, whether theology may not become a descriptive, or empirical, science. If this were to happen, results of the most momentous importance might be expected, for religion has always been a potent factor in directing human development.<sup>2</sup>

There is no reason for making an exception of religion. The facts in this field are open to observation, they occur according to laws, and it ought to be as easy and as profitable to ascertain the laws that operate in the religious realm as it is to discover those that hold good in the material world. Dr. Lee puts it this way:

God is intelligible, for he is related to the universe, his dwelling place, and to man, his child. Man is intelligible, for he is related to God, his Father, and to others of his kind, his brothers, and to the world, his home. Religion is intelligible, for it consists of the relations of God and his children. Whatever is intelligible, whatever has relations, can be treated by the scientific method. And whatever truth there is in God or in man or in religion or in the universe that can be verified in experience and objectified in life, or in human affairs, is scientific truth.<sup>3</sup>

Man's mastery of his world has become possible through a knowledge gained by the use of the scientific method. Observation of fact leads to the formulation of a theory which must be susceptible of verification in application to the world of experience. Religious knowledge comes in exactly the same way. Facts precede the theory, and then the theory based upon them is further tested in the practical application of it to the problems and requirements of life. Dr. Lee says further:

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<sup>2</sup>"Theology as an Empirical Science," p. 3. By D. C. Macintosh. Macmillan.

<sup>3</sup>"The Religion of Science," p. 13. Revell.

We proceed exactly upon the same lines to determine what the religion of science is that we follow to find out what the stars of science or the atoms of science are. When our knowledge of the planets is such that we can verify the truth of it in sailing our ships, we may know we have found the stars of science. When our knowledge of the molecules is such that we can verify the truth of it in cooking our food and mixing our medicines, we may know that we have discovered the atoms of science. When our knowledge of religion is such that we can verify the truth of it in living our spiritual life completely, continuously, and triumphantly, we may know that we have found the religion of science.<sup>4</sup>

Religion needs the scientific method for accuracy and efficiency just as much as any other field of experience does. Men have always observed the stars, they have always enjoyed the fruits of the ground, and they have always had notions about the earth's formation. But they never had any true and definite notion concerning the relation of the planets to the sun until the Copernican system of astronomy was hit upon as an explanation; they never learned to make the ground yield an abundance of fruit until the soil was tilled under the guidance of the laws of chemistry; they never understood the process of the earth's formation until geology revealed the strata which were deposited through long ages and modified by occasional upheavals. So, man has always had communion with God and lived in a society more or less controlled by the principles of religion and morality. But he will never make his religious experience yield its richest product in knowledge and in practical achievement until he learns the laws of religion through the scientific method. As Dr. Lee says, a scientific theology has

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<sup>4</sup>"The Religion of Science," p. 164. Revell.

been made imperative through the remarkable progress that has taken place in all other fields.

Now, religion needs a system formed in accordance with the scientific method to contain the laws, principles, and generalizations thinkers have formed from the study of it, just as really as rocks need geology to house the ideas students have formed from the study of the stone-ribbed earth. Nature is not science, it is the subject matter of science. God creates nature, but man creates the science in which to mentally hold it. Religion is not science; it is the subject matter of science. God is the author of the religious reality at the bottom of human nature, but man must build the science which is to contain his conception of religious facts. Theology, if constructed in accordance with the principles of the scientific method, will become a science for religion, precisely as astronomy has become a science for the stars. There are religious facts as entirely as there are rock facts. Here is the basis of a science for religion. Religious facts, too, are in a class by themselves; they cannot be systematized in any other science than in one built for religion. Unless religious facts are observed and systematized in a theology as completely scientific as botany is, they will remain to be tossed to and fro and carried about by every crank's wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby the charmers and rain-makers lie in wait to deceive.<sup>5</sup>

If religion is an exception, then it is off by itself. It cannot share in the general progress of the race, and man is in the anomalous situation that makes it possible for him to advance in all minor interests and necessary for him to stand still in the one activity which concerns him most of all. If theology cannot use the inductive method, it is not a progressive science—it is not a science at all. And religion has suffered more from this one thing than from any other—from the fact that it has been given exception-

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<sup>5</sup> "The Religion of Science," p. 41. Revell.

al consideration instead of being frankly treated as one of the provinces of science. While other branches of knowledge and endeavor have been free to revise their principles and conclusions according to the indications of the total facts in hand, religion has been confined to ancient generalizations long after a free use of recognized facts would have led to modifications. The reason for the present unsatisfactory position of religion is thus stated by Wieman:

While all other interests, such as politics, industry, education, science, art, and sex love, have been growing out into clear and well-defined functions of culture, each recognized for what it is, each with an "essence" of its own, religion remains still in the dark. It is confused with social service, with morality, with art, with the inertia of tradition, with the illusory play of fancy, with group life as such, with philosophy, with science, and heaven knows what all. It is because religion in actual fact has not differentiated itself from the rudimentary forms of the several arts and sciences, now established or yet to be. She has been so preoccupied in mothering that she has neglected to develop her own unique individuality. Religion is still more or less in the mixed and amorphous condition in which all branches of culture have stood in their rudimentary stages prior to that differentiation and distinction of function which comes with maturity.<sup>6</sup>

Thomas Huxley admitted that religion might be scientific when he wrote, "By science I understand all knowledge which rests upon evidence and reasoning of a like character to that which claims our assent to ordinary scientific propositions; and if any man is able to make good the assertion that his theology rests upon valid evidence and sound reasoning, then it appears to me that such theology must

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<sup>6</sup>"Religious Experience and Scientific Method," p. 356. By H. N. Wieman. Macmillan.

take its place as a part of science." William James proved to be a true prophet when he said, "Let empiricism once become associated with religion, as hitherto through some strange misunderstanding it has been associated with irreligion, and I believe that a new era of religion as well as of philosophy will be ready to begin." That era has dawned, and theology, which had fallen into disuse, has regained its place through the adoption of the methods of science. James himself contributed no little to the revival of interest in religion through his study of "The Varieties of Religious Experience." Many of the popular attacks upon the Church are launched against abandoned views which were held generations and centuries ago. It is quite true that some of the tenets of an earlier day cannot stand the searching light of recent knowledge any more readily than the crude notions of the science of the same period can. But the theology of the present time is being written from the standpoint of experience, and a great change has come about even since Dr. Lee wrote:

Not one of the systems formulated by the Church in past ages to mediate the realities of religion furnishes an argument with which to answer present-day unbelief. All the world to-day is thinking and speaking in accordance with standards erected by the scientific method. When a skeptic in matters of faith, therefore, but one schooled in thought by the scientific method, wanders out from some department of universally valid knowledge and finds himself over on the "religious commons," he listens to the conflicting opinions handed down by authority to the various occupants of that unprotected territory and retires with the thought that reason in religion is impossible. He falls into the habit of regarding the whole subject as quite outside the domain of verifiable reality. If



he is polite and considerate, he speaks of it, when in the presence of others, with a kind of condescending, patronizing air. He is careful to give no offense to the deluded victims of irrational opinion picked up on the "religious commons," but at the bottom of his soul he cherishes for them the most profound pity.<sup>7</sup>

When religion ceases to be a matter of authority and the right of private judgment is granted, one man's opinion seems to be as good as another's until a body of religious knowledge is built up through the scientific method. In Roman Catholicism the hearer receives with meekness the engrafted word, while in Protestantism each individual may freely put his opinion against the assertion of the preacher, and in the present chaotic condition of religious thought the impression is often made that there is no such thing as religious knowledge and that the content of faith is just what each may choose to make it. "Religion," Dr. Lee remarks, "is the only important reality left unsystematized by the scientific method. Hence the preacher labors under the disadvantage of having a competitor in every person to whom he proclaims the gospel." What preacher cannot duplicate from his own experience this incident related by Lee? He had just finished a clear and Scriptural sermon on the reign of law throughout the whole realm of nature and grace and was walking down the aisle toward the door, when he was met by a large and uncommonly pious brother who looked him squarely in the face and remarked with an air of ominous significance, "My brother, I want to say to you, sir, that I do not agree with your doctrine." Feeling that an argument would be use-

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<sup>7</sup>"The Religion of Science," p. 48. Revell.

less and out of place, the minister closed the conversation by saying, "My friend, this is a free country, and on the subject of religion every solitary American is entitled to his opinion. Good-by." The religious teacher will be annoyed by every person who cares to form and express an opinion, regardless of his knowledge of the subject, until theology becomes a respectable science. Dr. Lee rather facetiously describes present conditions:

This unclaimed valuable theological ground is territory that we may call religious commons. Here the gypsies camp and tell fortunes. Here the palmists mark off from lines of the hand the future of the ignorant. Here the juggler plays the "mango trick" and produces on the spot trees in a minute by sleight of hand. Here the faith healers get in their work and, while the patient waits, pay off accounts against health, which violations of law have been running up for years. Since the students of the skies have utilized all the space belonging to the constellations, the astrologers have been forced to move. They now do a lucrative business on the "religious commons." Since the chemists have organized, and reduced to the system of an army, the vagrant and straggling atoms it was the custom of the adventurer in former times to hold up and search for the elixir of life, the alchemists have been compelled to vacate their old premises. They, too, have moved over on the "religious commons." As soon as any class of phenomena secures for itself a scientific dwelling place to occupy the land proper to it, then all the tramps accustomed to hang about that region are forced to clear out. Naturally they must have new soil to loiter on, and as the theological is about the only open clearing in sight, they soon find their way to the "religious commons."<sup>8</sup>

Laborers in other fields have used the scientific method and been richly rewarded. They have developed a body of knowledge and produced practical

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<sup>8</sup>"The Religion of Science," p. 22. Revell.

results which make a recognition of the expert unavoidable. These men, cultivating different fields, work together in that each makes his contribution from his own section and recognizes the work of others. In these pursuits importance is attached only to the opinions of those who have gone to pains to gain a knowledge of the subject. But not so with religion.

The only interests of human nature unhoused up to the style of their importance in this great city of science are the religious facts of humanity. Where the theological temple should stand in the center of the city we find the partially occupied space we call the "religious commons." Here the cranks, the charmers, the soothsayers, the Indian-doctors, and the rain-makers congregate, driven from the completely settled sections of the city. Here doctors, without diplomas, communicate to men born blind the secret of seeing in a minute. Here the lame throw away their crutches, the aged their spectacles, and the dying their disease. Here the faddists amaze the multitudes and set the tongues of the initiated to pouring out wisdom, such as Solomon in his most lucid moments never dreamed, and about which poor, aching, sin-sick humanity has had to wait throughout all the weary centuries to hear. Religion is the only subject concerning which every person exercises the privilege of private interpretation. In the absence of any universally valid science of it this is to be expected.<sup>9</sup>

However, the case is somewhat different with religion in that the chief value of the religious expert lies in what he may do *in* a man rather than in what he may do *for* him. The skill of the physician avails for the patient who may understand nothing of the cause and cure of diseases. The lawyer presents the case of his lay client and defends him against

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<sup>9</sup> "The Religion of Science." p. 24. Revell.

injustice without sharing with him his legal knowledge. These experts are of value because of their ability to do things *for* us. On the other hand, the religious expert is more like the teacher, who helps by imparting his knowledge and inspiration to the pupil. Leaders in religion are not priests who offer sacrifices in behalf of common people who dare not approach God except through this mediatorial service; they are not saints whose works of supererogation may be transferred to the account of their less faithful brethren; they serve by pointing out the better way which has been opened up to their own faith, and the benefits received are determined by the degree in which their followers reproduce the saving experience. Moreover, religion takes account of the experiences of all, and therefore the thoughts and feelings of every person, however ignorant or humble, may not be ignored. The laws of religion are formulated with the total religious experience in view, and because religion is so intimate and personal it is never wise to overlook the word of even the most illiterate. And even in those fields in which the specialist must be trusted for what he can do *for* a man, the expert is checked up by the common sense of the public. However skillful the surgeon may claim to have become through opportunities for professional knowledge, the final test is his ability to postpone the long visit of his patient to the graveyard. The lawyer's reputation rests at last upon his ability to conduct the cases of his clients to a successful issue.

The scientific method has already been widely and successfully used in religion. Many of the facts

of religious experience have already been formulated into laws. Dr. Lee refers to John Wesley as a man who used the scientific method:

Wesley unconsciously practiced the scientific method; he broke with convention and custom and relied directly for his success upon the facts of religion. John Wesley's journal is a record of religious achievement only made possible by the practice of the scientific method. It was not conventional theology that opened the fountains of spiritual life in the hearts of the savage Kingswood colliers as they listened to the gospel. It was force straight from the warm love of God that thawed their frozen souls and surprised their black, soot-covered faces with the first tears of penitence that ever washed gutters down their cheeks.<sup>10</sup>

When a new light swings into view above the religious horizon, people sometimes wonder why preachers do not hail it with delight and follow its gleam. The light is so bright to their untutored eyes that they cannot understand how any religious teacher can fail to recognize its heavenly origin. But it is not always spiritual blindness and hardness of heart that makes the official upholders of religion in a community turn a cold shoulder to the man or woman who suddenly descends upon it with the announcement of a new revelation from God. It is more often a knowledge of the history of religion, through which they know that the new light is a mere fox-fire glow. Mrs. Eddy appears with a message that seems to many to revolutionize religious thought and promise immediate release from all human ills, but the student of history and philosophy knows that her theory is as old as East Indian thought. Dr. Dowie arises and flourishes upon the

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<sup>10</sup> "The Religion of Science," p. 60. Revell,

promise of an immediate healing of all bodily diseases. Mrs. McPherson astonishes the West with her spectacular presentation of "the fourfold gospel." But preachers do not become excited, or leave all to follow any one of these leaders, because they know some Church history. They have read that these theories have sprung up time and again and been tried out and eliminated because they cannot stand the acid test of prolonged experience. Such experiments recur from time to time. They are usually undertaken by earnest leaders who are not familiar with religious history, and the following is composed of impressionable people who are not acquainted with the broad field of past religious experience. Many of these repetitions have taken place in the United States, which, according to Forsyth, is "the richest ground in the world for every variety of crank." They arise, run their course, and subside without let or hindrance, because religion is free and every person is granted the privilege of making a fool of himself in his own way—except, of course, when a leader establishes a sect like Mormonism, which recurs to the patriarchal age and annuls the fundamental laws of morality. Churches may be founded by new leaders upon a "flat earth," or a literal interpretation of the Bible, or "the imminent second coming," and seasoned leaders of religion take little notice. They know, like Gamaliel, that one leader "boasting himself to be somebody" has arisen, and then another, and that every self-deluded prophet will sooner or later lose himself and his followers in the wilderness of fanatical ignorance. There has already been a wide application of the "trial and error" method. And yet Whitehead can truly say

that "the real, practical problems of religion have never been adequately studied in the only way in which such problems *can* be studied—namely, in the school of experience."

Though the Bible is an ancient book which came into existence long before the birth of modern science, it follows the scientific method in that its great doctrines are based upon experience. In this respect it is in contrast with the confessions of faith which deduce their principles from the Bible as a book of authority. The prophets were not theorizers. They did not deduce their teaching from premises brought over in the pages of a sacred book from a prehistoric past. Their mighty utterances arose from their observation of facts. Not a single prophet, for instance, refers to "the fall," and, except for a doubtful verse in Job, there is no reference to the history of Adam in the entire Old Testament outside of the book of Genesis. The doctrine of sin, as preached by the prophets, was not derived from an act in the far distant past, but from the actual life of Israel and the rest of the world. Dr. Orchard expresses the general view when he writes:

Few things could be less expected than that the first popular theological controversy to emerge after the great World War should be concerning the fall of man. Most of us have been brought up in the generation which succeeded Darwin and which on the whole accepted his account of the origin of man—namely, that man was not a specially created species, but that he developed as a variation from some animal ancestry. Those of us who have been trained in modern Biblical criticism had never been taught that we were to look in the early chapters of Genesis for a scientific account of the creation of the world or the origin of man. We were told that the early chapters of Genesis are a monotheistic adaptation of Babylonian

cosmogonies and of myths which exist in similar forms among all peoples; and we were to look for its inspiration in the higher moral and theological level which it reached, in its dignified and poetic beauty, and in the general truth of its referring everything existing ultimately to the creation of God, with the exception of sin, which it traced to some disobedience on the part of man. It therefore never occurred to those of us who belong to the last generation, not only in time but in sympathy, that there could be any question of real conflict between the story in the Bible and the account given by science.<sup>11</sup>

Paul also bases his teaching upon observed and experienced facts. He does draw a contrast between the first Adam and the second Adam, and compares the effect of the sin of one with that of the obedience of the other, but his doctrine of sin is not a question of ancient history. When he would convict his readers of sin, he points to the world about him, saying, "See how these Romans live!" And when the Jew is ready to say, "We told you so," he turns upon them with the same accusation. "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you!" You are a disgrace to God! By actual observation he was forced to the conviction that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." The Bible is not a theoretical or speculative book, and the confessions erred from its teachings in so far as they were systems of doctrine hung upon a theoretical interpretation of human nature derived from the account of "the fall." A study of psychology and of the daily paper will enable the modern student to understand where the prophets and apostles got their doctrine of sin. Bishop Gore writes:

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<sup>11</sup> "The Finality of Christ," p. 40. By W. E. Orchard. Doran.



But first of all let us continue to publish the abandonment by the Church of an untenable position to which medieval and later Christianity often unfortunately committed itself—*viz.*, that, in spite of all appearances to the contrary which were quite evident to some of the educated fathers, the early chapters of Genesis record literal history. This is a position which is now quite untenable. Let it be as publicly abandoned as possible. Let us return to the position of some of the fathers, that what we have here is not history, but “ideas” or “doctrines in the form of a story.” From these stories or visions we are intended to learn that there is only one God, the creator of heaven and earth; that he is good and his purpose good and his creation good; that the source of evil lies not in matter, but in sin—that is, rebellion of free wills; that sin breeds misery and death for the man who commits it and for his successors. Thus we should regard Adam and Eve not as historical individuals, but as Man and Woman—as Everyman. We have need to think out all the consequences of this change of position and adapt all our popular teaching to it. And it is not so much an innovation as a return to a position which sometimes received expression in the early centuries of the Church.<sup>12</sup>

In taking this position Bishop Gore is, as he says, only getting on common ground with some of the early Church fathers. While they were laboring under a theory of inspiration which would have prevented a free use of the scientific method, they resorted to the allegorical method in interpreting the early chapters of Genesis. Dr. Findlay cites Origen as an instance:

In dealing with the Scriptures, alike of the Old Testament and of the New, Origen was frequently scornful of the acceptance of the literal meaning. Thus he says, for example, in *De Principiis*, iv, 16: “Who that has understanding will suppose that the first and second and third day, and the

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<sup>12</sup> “Can We Then Believe?” p. 65. By Charles Gore. Scribner’s.

evening and the morning, existed without a sun and moon and stars? and that the first day was actually without a sky? And who is so foolish as to imagine that God in the manner of a husbandman planted a garden in Eden toward the east and placed in it a tree of life, visible and palpable, so that one eating of the fruit with the bodily teeth obtained life? and again that one was a partaker of good and evil by eating what was taken from a tree?"<sup>13</sup>

However, with a theory of "the fall" already fixed in the thought of the Church, it is easy to read it into the Bible, and when psychology appeals to the facts of human action for the basis of a theory of human nature, the impression goes out that the psychologist is contradicting the Bible. But modern psychology is much closer to the Bible than the confessions of scholastic Protestantism. The conception of human nature commonly held from Augustine to recent times did not originate from the Bible, but came through several sources, some of which are suggested by Rufus M. Jones:

This medieval account of man, as morally depraved, it should be said, rests upon a great epic view of the universe which has gradually given place to a truer view, based upon verified facts. The classical account of this epic view of the universe—one of the greatest epics in human history—was written by St. Augustine of Hippo in his "City of God," and it was accepted for the next fourteen centuries as though it were absolute and final truth. There were, of course, texts of Scripture, in both Old and New Testaments, which seemed to support it; in fact, it was supposed to be drawn unaltered from the wells of revelation. We now know, however, that Plato's "Timæus," the Gnostic systems of the second and third centuries, the Mystery Religions, Neoplatonism, and Persian Mythology all played a very important part in the

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<sup>13</sup> "Byways in Early Christian Literature," p. 136. By A. F. Findlay. Scribner's.

formation of this mighty epic system which the Carthaginian saint of Hippo bequeathed to the Christian centuries that followed him and which Milton turned into his great poem. Scripture texts furnished one source of influence in the making of this view of the world and of man, but the complicated intellectual environment of the early formative Christian centuries was a no less important source of influence, and it must be emphatically said that Augustine's theory of the universe and of man is a "construction" which he made, not something furnished to him ready-made in the Bible.<sup>14</sup>

Jesus never mentions Adam, or "the fall," nor did he propound any theory of depravity. He taught from actual life, and to this day he is the world's model teacher. He used the scientific method.

The confessions of faith, with their doctrines of election and reprobation, contain systematic statements of the whole body of religious truth. The basic principle is: "In Adam's fall, we sinned all." This way of hinging the whole destiny of the race for weal or woe upon the act of the first man is not in keeping with the psychology of sin. Sin as moral lapse is not realized early in a people's history. At first there is no distinction between the violation of a moral law and of a ceremonial law. Whatever is contrary to established custom is "sin." In the Old Testament the moral and ceremonial requirements are equally binding, and it was only through a long process of moral development that the ceremonial parts were shed, as having only local and temporary meaning, while the moral principles were simplified and carried over into Christianity as a permanent element in religion. Conviction of sin is never found among religious novices, who cannot

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<sup>14</sup> "Religious Foundations," p. 32. Edited by Rufus M. Jones. Macmillan.

realize "the deep damnation of the race" or imagine what it would mean to be forever estranged from God. The great confession rises upon the lips of an Isaiah, as his refined soul feels the contrast between itself and the holy God, or of a Wesley as he is constrained to cry out, "I myself am a child of hell." There is nothing in primitive religion, ancient or modern, to indicate that the first man was capable of making a choice which would determine the moral quality of the whole subsequent race. A truer understanding of sin is coming through a study of psychology.

The two great interests of the modern world are religion and science, and there is not the slightest probability that either will drop into a position of secondary importance. The long experience of the race shows that people cannot get along without the former, and the benefits which are daily coming from the latter are too great to allow it to fall into disuse. The patient examination of the resources of nature which have yielded up their treasures and increased the comforts of life a hundredfold will not cease. People who read by electric lights, travel on palace cars, and listen over the radio cannot decry modern science. Both religion and science are in the world to stay.

What is the proper relation between these two chief interests of mankind? Is there necessary conflict between them? Shall they look upon each other with mutual hostility or distrust? Religion is essentially an attitude toward God, and science is systematized knowledge of the world of experience. There is not any ground for conflict between the two, and there is no reason for thinking that either will

suffer injury from the other. However, there has been for centuries an apparent conflict, which arose because "science emphasized ideas which modified the religious picture of the world." The opposition between science and religion was not the fault of science, but of the world itself, if, indeed, that which lies in the constitution of nature may be spoken of as "fault." The realm of nature, which produced one impression upon the mind of the casual observer, yielded a quite different view to scientific study, and since the popular view had been incorporated into the theories of religion, it could not be corrected without giving the impression that science was dangerous to religion. But the misunderstanding was only temporary, and even now it is rapidly passing. Man must unify his world. He cannot think that science and religion occupy entirely separate fields and that a thing can be true religiously and false scientifically. Whatever conflict there is must be due to erroneous conceptions in one or the other, or both. Religion has nothing to fear from scientific discovery. Bishop Gore correctly states the attitude of religion to science:

It is the primary challenge of reason that we should recognize the unity of all truth and welcome all the light we can get from all quarters; and the man who believes in God, and recognizes in one God the source of all truth and all reality, must feel that it would be an intolerable situation if he were to find himself in antagonism to the really authoritative disclosures of any one of the physical sciences; for natural science is from God as truly as the prophetic word, though one is as liable as the other to misrepresentation and distortion.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> "Can We Then Believe?" p. 49. Scribner's.

The changed view of the world presented by modern astronomy and geology made a readjustment necessary. But the misunderstanding was much greater than there was any need for, and but for the combativeness of theologians and the arrogance of scientists the transition from the ancient to the modern point of view might have been made without damage. The Church thought it was fortified by a direct revelation from heaven given in a Bible which was accurate in every assertion, and science became obsessed with the notion that only material facts are real. A modification of premises was thus rendered inevitable. Dean Inge indicates the change that is demanded and tells why it has taken nearly five hundred years to arrive at a time when the adjustment can be made successfully:

It was, I believe, the terrible Wars of Religion that made the fatal rift between religion and science which we are now trying to close. It was a really disastrous accident that the greatest problem which the Christian Church has ever had to face was thrust upon it when it was distracted by an internecine conflict. That problem was the destruction of the geocentric view of the universe by the discoveries of Copernicus and Galileo. The momentous consequences of these discoveries were not at first apparent. Copernicus had no wish to provoke a battle with the Church, and his writings were not published till after his death; Galileo was intimidated and persecuted. This was only to be expected; but the Church of the Roman Renaissance would probably have withdrawn from an untenable position. Not so the Church of the Spanish Inquisition, of Luther and Calvin. Catholic and Protestant vied with each other in denouncing the new theories. Nor has this disaster ever been retrieved. By degrees the Copernican astronomy has passed into the region of common knowledge; and though Rome put it under the ban, the devout Romanist is no longer expected to assert that the earth

is the center of the universe. But the retreat of Church authority has been gradual and, as usual, unavowed; there has never come a time when it seemed urgently necessary to consider the new situation created by the revolution in astronomy. The task has been put off from generation to generation, and to this day little has been done to relieve the strain upon the intellect and conscience of the Christian world. Those Churchmen who airily declare that there is no longer any conflict between Christianity and science are either very thoughtless or are willfully shutting their eyes. There is a very serious conflict, and the challenge was presented not in the age of Darwin, but in the age of Copernicus and Galileo.<sup>16</sup>

The world needs both religion and science, and it is just as certain that science and religion need each other. Science must have religion for motive and for fresh facts in the region of greatest experience of reality. Science must have that faith in reality and in the permanent value of knowledge which religion gives before it can have the heart to spend years of toil in collecting and systematizing the facts upon which its laws and theories are based. What would be the sense in studying a world which has no meaning or value? But religion alone seizes reality as a whole, and science must depend upon it for inspiration. On the other hand, religion must have science for the systematization of its own facts and for a knowledge of the laws of the world. In a word, science must be religious and religion scientific. The great day for both religion and science lies ahead. In his epoch-marking work Sabatier delivers this prophetic utterance:

The transformation of the Christian consciousness and its liberation from all exterior servitude began on the day when

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<sup>16</sup> "Science, Religion, and Reality," p. 356. Edited by Joseph Needham. Macmillan.

piety and science first met. They will be completed, and the religion of the Spirit will reign, all systems of authority having been done away, on the day when piety and science shall have become so mutually interpenetrated as to be thoroughly united into a single entity; inward piety the conscience of science and science the legitimate expression of piety. This being the case, nothing appears to be more urgent than the constitution of a truly scientific theology.<sup>17</sup>

The time has come when Protestantism can no longer hesitate to place itself unreservedly and unequivocally upon the side of the scientist in so far as the method for ascertaining truth is concerned. Man's only teacher is experience, and the only method by which the facts of experience can be understood is by observation and experiment. In his article on "Protestantism at the Crossroads" Dr. W. P. Merrill writes:

Romanists have stood by their "deposit of faith," anathematizing all who depart from it, whatever science may say. Protestants have professed a faith in freedom of intellect; but too often they have let themselves be dragged along grudgingly, timidly, making half-hearted attempts to tie bits of new knowledge to bits of the old belief. Is it any wonder that some who have for the Roman Catholic a sort of contemptuous respect have for such Protestants only contempt? The Protestant must declare his faith that all truth is God's truth, that fact ascertained by honest investigation is always to be taken as truth. He must not grudgingly or timidly acquiesce in the right of the human intellect to free scientific investigation of any and every matter, including religion, of any and every book, including the Bible; he must glory in that right, eagerly champion and defend it, working shoulder to shoulder with the scientist in the search for truth. "Warfare between science and religion" may at times be a necessary and worthy conflict for the Romanist. It is always needless and destruc-

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<sup>17</sup>"Religions of Authority," p. 318. By Auguste Sabatier, McClure, Phillips and Company.



tive internecine strife for the Protestant. Protestantism must avow its absolute confidence in the best obtainable knowledge and must stand by that avowal, though the old heavens fall.<sup>18</sup>

Science and religion have much in common. They are both possessed of that radical love of truth which demands reality at any price. Moral earnestness is alike the first qualification of the scientist and the theologian. In his "Aids to Reflection" Coleridge wrote this arresting sentence: "He who begins by loving Christianity better than the truth will proceed by loving his own sect or Church better than Christianity and end in loving himself better than all." Pure, disinterested love of truth—a determination to follow on in pursuit, wherever the path may lead—is the finest expression of utter devotion to God that the world has ever known, and it is equally pleasing to the God of all truth whether found in prophet, apostle, statesman, or scientist. A theologian pays this generous tribute to the scientist's love of truth:

No one will dispute that it is to science first and foremost that man owes his present mastery of things material, and at first blush science appears to be the expression of the intellect alone. But how did science come into existence? Through the passion of a succession of individuals for knowledge for its own sake. Science is the by-product of the disinterested love of truth. It is by its noble army of martyrs that the victories of science, as of religion, have been won. Man's present triumph over nature is due solely to that long line of men who have braved death, legal persecution, social ostracism, poverty, and neglect because they valued truth above all else; who have valued it so highly that, in days when it seemed that religion and science were incompatible, they

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<sup>18</sup> *World's Work*, February, 1924.

have cheerfully for truth's sake renounced, not merely the good things of this life, but the hope of a life to come. Science is the clearest proof of all that the spirit of disinterested constructiveness is the mainspring of progress.<sup>19</sup>

However, truth is not a fixed entity. It is life. And the scientist does more than try to discover what already is. He collects facts and formulates laws in order that he may coöperate with life in bringing in the world that ought to be. He trusts life, and in his own way he is seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness as truly as the worker in the field of religion is. He also is in copartnership with God. Streeter writes further:

Man has a disinterested passion for creative work to match his disinterested love of truth. It is man the discoverer, backed up by man the artist-craftsman and the artist-organizer, who has conquered nature. Sometimes an originator has used his discoveries and inventions for selfish instead of for noble ends, though more often it is some one else who has seen this use for them. But, roughly speaking, it is true that invention and organization, like pure science, have been the work of men who loved them for their own sake.<sup>20</sup>

In a world of selfishness and self-seeking, the Church can ill afford to give scanty and grudging recognition to that large class of men who, with no ulterior motive, are devoting their lives to patient and poorly remunerated toil and are finding their reward in the additions which they are able to make to the world's store of truth. Gardner counts them worthy of great honor. He writes:

The world at large little understands or appreciates the

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<sup>19</sup> Reality," p. 160. By B. H. Streeter. Macmillan.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

devotee of science. It sets him down as an unpractical dreamer, except when from time to time he astonishes it by some brilliant discovery which can be put to practical use. If his devotion renders him, as it often does, a somewhat abstracted husband or inefficient parent, it abuses him for selfishness. The Marthas of the world are always claiming from him a practical coöperation, which he is often unfit to give. Seldom indeed is his life one of prosperity or worldly success. Yet as a class the devotees of science, of truth in nature and in history, are probably as happy as any class of men. Great and even small discoveries of new scientific laws or new keys to history and conduct give them a pleasure which is not only keen but pure, and which entails no reaction. They also "touch God's right hand in the darkness and are lifted up and strengthened."<sup>21</sup>

Religion, philosophy, and science are alike in that each of them places upon truth a value beyond estimate. Neither can tolerate falsehood, or be bought off from devotion to fact, or be induced to give any other report of that which they find than that which they honestly believe to be true. In his wonderfully lucid "Introduction to Philosophy," E. S. Brightman quotes Schopenhauer on the high calling of the philosopher:

The impartial philosopher may find Schopenhauer's language extreme, but he will approve that philosopher's intent when he proffers a philosophy "whose polestar is truth alone, the naked, unrewarded, unbefriended, often persecuted truth," and contrasts it with "that *alma mater*, the good, well-to-do university philosophy, which, burdened with a hundred aims and a thousand motives, comes on its course cautiously tacking, while it keeps before its eyes at all times the fear of the Lord, the will of the ministry, the laws of the established Church, the wishes of the publisher, the at-

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<sup>21</sup> "The Practical Basis of Christian Belief," p. 77. By Percy Gardner. Scribner's,

tendance of the students, the good will of colleagues, the course of current politics, the momentary tendency of the public, and Heaven knows what besides." <sup>22</sup>

Religion has been greatly benefited by science. Whatever increases a man's knowledge of his world ministers to his religion, for there is no fact without religious significance. The vast universe revealed by astronomy affects our view of God. It does not shed any new light upon the *quality* of the divine, but it does help us to get a better conception of his illimitable greatness and power. Our knowledge of astronomy also helps us to realize that we are living in a big world. A person moving from the lowlands to the mountains feels at first that he is "shut in" by the towering peaks about him, although he knows that there are passes through which he may find an exit and the sky is open above him. So astronomy opens up to the imagination the vast home of the soul. If the psalmist was awed by the heavens that could be seen with the naked eye, what must be our wonder when we are told that there is a star with a diameter three hundred times greater than that of our sun and that some heavenly bodies are so remote that the rays of light by which we see them now must have started earthward twenty-five thousand years ago. The world revealed by the microscope is no less wonderful and awe-inspiring. Science enlarges our neighborhood and helps us to become acquainted with it. It is making of the whole world one great neighborhood, for the neighbor is "one who dwells near." Nothing is doing more to harmonize and unify the American people than the radio.

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<sup>22</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 19. Henry Holt and Company.

Science has been reproached for causing its devotees to lose their sense of beauty. Darwin confessed in his later years that his taste for poetry and music had all but disappeared. But that is only the price that a man pays for overspecialization in any field. Exclusive devotion to theology will have the same effect. Theologians have no eye for art or natural scenery. Dean Sperry gives some instances:

Through the Middle Ages we have fleeting glimpses of saintly men going about the ways of the world with their cowls drawn low over their eyes, their gaze turned inwards. We see Bernard crossing the Alps. We hear his fellows at the close of day make casual mention of the great mountains they have passed. And we, who journey to Switzerland to lift our eyes to the eternal snows, wonder at his question, "What mountains?" The Renaissance gave back to the non-religious world an artificial and self-conscious feeling for nature, but this emotion was too shallow to give passage to the deeper religious impulses of the time, and nothing of this spurious paganism passed into the religion of the Reformation. Erasmus follows Bernard across the Alpine pass and spends the hours of transit composing an essay upon Old Age! In so far as Calvinism was conscious of the order of external nature it looked upon it with distrust and turned away to ponder the superior glories of Total Depravity and Limited Election. If John Calvin ever saw the lone sparrow fallen to the ground, he passed by on the other side.<sup>23</sup>

Science has its limitations, which are being frankly acknowledged by scientists in recent years. It is not a substitute for religion. It cannot solve the problems of existence, because its function is to describe processes rather than to seize the meaning of the whole. But the theoretical conclusions and the

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<sup>23</sup> "Religious Foundations," p. 44. Edited by Rufus M. Jones. Macmillan.

practical achievements of science challenge the admiration and win the gratitude of mankind. Bishop Gore indignantly resents the intimation that modern science has proven to be worthless:

The tendency in recent exponents of the physical sciences to recognize the limitations of their special subject-matter, and to refuse to base their theory of the universe only on material elements and physical processes, is sometimes very foolishly called "the bankruptcy of science." What an extraordinary misuse of a term is here! Science bankrupt—at a moment when the splendor of its achievement is the chief glory of our race! Is it "bankruptcy" to take accurate stock of our resources, and to refuse to contract obligations which they do not enable us to meet, while gloriously fulfilling those which they really cover? That is not bankruptcy, but the assurance against bankruptcy. Would to God that the theologians had always imitated this reserve or modesty of recent exponents of science! Let all who desire to praise God for humanity recognize to the full the glory of science and scientific method, and its devotion to truth, in which it does not shrink from the extremest sacrifices.<sup>24</sup>

The greatest contribution of science to religion has been made through the method which it has furnished religion for classifying its phenomena. It has provided the theologian with the scientific method. "Religion," says Streeter, "starts with the method of anthropomorphic intuition, but it is compelled, on pain of degenerating into superstition, to check results so reached by reference to facts and laws of the purely scientific order." Theology is undergoing rejuvenation through the adoption of the methods of science. Its truth is being clarified and error is being eliminated through scientific tests.

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<sup>24</sup>"Can We Then Believe?" p. 55. By Charles Gore. Scribner's.

That is being accomplished of which Dean Farrar spoke when he wrote, "He who helps to disencumber Christianity from dubious or false accretions is rendering to it a service which may be more urgently necessary than if he composed a book on evidences." Religion has come a long way, and it has not only brought over a good deal of useless baggage, but it has also gathered quite a bit of rubbish from the ground over which it has passed. The time is now at hand to separate between the useful and the useless, the essential and the incidental, the true and the false, and the instrument which makes this discriminating work possible is the scientific method. Street-er looks to science for the purification of religion:

Primitive religion looks for evidence of Divine action mainly in the abnormal and the inexplicable, in the comet or the thunderbolt rather than in the sunrise or the growing blade—with the result that the narrow margin left for the recognition of any specifically divine activity at all shrinks day by day with every advance of human knowledge. No small part of human progress has consisted in getting away from the conception of the divine as essentially the irrational. The Greek philosophers achieved this along the line of the pure intellect; they saw the universe as the expression of Reason. The Hebrew prophets did the same thing, but along another line; for them the idea of the "holy"—originally the awe-inspiring quality in irrational taboo—was transmuted till it became the characteristic symbol of the ethically sublime. In our own time it is science that is ever forcing men to complete the work which the Greek and the Hebrew began. Science is the great cleanser of human thinking; it makes impossible any religion but the highest.<sup>25</sup>

Macintosh, of the Yale Divinity School, has been working with great enthusiasm upon the theory

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<sup>25</sup> "Reality," p. 271. Macmillan.

that theology is as truly a science as astronomy, or chemistry, or biology, and that it can build up through the method of observation and experiment a body of truth as solid and tangible as that of any other science. He confidently expects theology to come into its own and ascend the throne again as the queen of the sciences. In the introduction to his convincing discussion of the subject he writes:

With the progress of science and general information, theology and religion have been developing in rationality. Instead of being rationalized out of existence, may it not be that religion and its theology are being rationalized into a universally valid and finally satisfactory form? The history of practical religion may fairly be regarded as a prolonged empirical investigation. It has proceeded according to the thoroughly accredited "trial and error" method. And while hopelessly unscientific theological notions are being steadily eliminated by scientific thought and investigation, may not theology itself possibly be so rejuvenated by modern methods as to become more than ever able to give to religion the knowledge it needs? Perhaps empirical science will yet prove to be the best friend in disguise that religion has ever had. In the process of removing those things that are shaken, may it not become evident that things which are not shaken still remain? And may not thus a firm foundation be found for theology as a descriptive or empirical science? Indeed, the surest way of meeting successfully the attacks of the sciences is for theology herself to become genuinely scientific. If this can be accomplished, she may yet regain in all its essentials that honorable place she once held as queen of the sciences, in their unanimous recognition of her as entitled to the highest station in the commonwealth of science.<sup>26</sup>

It was to be expected that the method of observation and experiment would first be used in connection with the realm of nature, because visible objects

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<sup>26</sup> "Theology as an Empirical Science," p. 5. Macmillan.



are so tangible and bodily effects are so obvious and immediate. Error in religion persists longer and works more slowly and more secretly. It is possible to live and ignore religion altogether—at least for a time—but men cannot live long without food, and if they take poison in its stead they die immediately. Francis Bacon strongly recommended this method and practiced it in moderation. He sought to turn thinkers from speculation to a study of nature at first hand. But the world looked upon it with suspicion and adopted it but slowly. Strange to say, it encountered fierce opposition from the very persons who would have profited most by using it. Dr. Lee describes the situation in his inimitable way:

When it was first proposed to investigate nature, and to subject all its phenomena to scientific inquiry, the movement was regarded as instigated by the devil. The members of the Royal Society, who began their work in what they termed experimental philosophy in 1661, called down upon their heads ridicule and satire and invective such as have no parallel in history. The great Dr. Robert South referred to members of the Royal Society in an oration before the University of Oxford by saying, "They can admire nothing except fleas, lice, and themselves." Oliver Goldsmith, as Citizen of the World, writes to his friend, Fum Hoan, first president of the Ceremonial Academy of Peking, concerning the experiments of the members of the Royal Society. "The labors of such men," he said, "instead of being calculated to amuse the public, are laid out only in diverting each other. The world becomes very little the wiser or better for knowing what is the peculiar food of an insect that is itself the food of another, which in its turn is eaten by a third, but there are men who have studied themselves into the habit of investigating such minutiae. To these such subjects are pleasing." Jonathan Swift ridicules those who were investigating nature by the scientific method in "Gulliver's Travels." When Gulliver was introduced into the learned academy of Lagado, he found

natural philosophers busy with all kinds of projects and known as projectors. "One had been at work for eight years devising a scheme for extracting sunbeams from cucumbers, which, after hermetically sealing in vials, he proposed to pack away for use in raw, inclement summers."<sup>27</sup>

However, the inductive method finally won out over all opposition, and now the first thing a scientist in any field does is to gather his facts. All theories are based upon facts, and when a fact is discovered that will not fit into the theory the fact is retained and the theory is modified accordingly. When Senator Frye invited Agassiz to go with him on a fishing trip into the Maine woods with the tempting statement that they could catch mountain trout ten inches long, the scientist replied that he knew that was a "fish story," because it was a scientific fact that that kind of trout never grew over nine inches. However, when the famous scientist, a few days later, received a trout ten inches long, packed in ice, he immediately wired the Senator, "The science of a lifetime knocked to pieces by a single fact." The greatest name among modern scientists is that of Charles Darwin. His theories have been greatly modified, but in spirit and method he cannot be excelled. He belongs among the world's great men. Dr. Lee tells why the world was so slow to adopt the scientific method and registers the final outcome in the field of nature:

It had been the custom to settle the order of things by resolution. Men in convention assembled felt it incumbent upon them to determine the nature of things by vote. If the majority declared the earth to be flat, that was an end to the controversy on the subject. The thought of actually investi-

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<sup>27</sup> "The Religion of Science," pp. 29-31. Revell.

gating an object in order to find out its constitution and place and movements was foreign to the minds of those called to administer upon the affairs of the world and its interests. Many of the poor, lone students here and there, who attempted to look into facts to learn how they worked, paid for their experience by the loss of their daring heads. In modern times, however, the revolt from the bondage of unworkable theories has been so pronounced and widespread that there is no longer any attempt to burn the men who think. Their motives are often misinterpreted, but they are no longer reduced to ashes. Explorers, who have used modern methods in manipulating nature, have found so much to bless mankind that they are beginning to get credit for being useful members of society. Darwin at last sleeps peacefully in Westminster Abbey.<sup>28</sup>

It was inevitable that the method which was proving so fruitful in the study of natural science should move on in its application through the rigid realms of astronomy, geology, and inorganic chemistry, to the increasingly fluid fields of biology, psychology, sociology, and religion. It is true that nature lends itself more readily to observation and experiment, because it is quantitative rather than qualitative; but, as Canon Streeter points out, quality is as certainly a characteristic of the universe as quantity, and while it cannot be accurately weighed or measured as if it were mere quantity, it can be observed and its laws can be ascertained. Quality is coterminous with life—a fact which must be reckoned with as an element in the totality of things—and therefore the realm of science could not be confined to the merely quantitative regions of “dead” matter, but had to go on and include the living spirit as well. However, when Dr. Lee wrote his book, the teachers of

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<sup>28</sup> “The Religion of Science,” p. 140. Revell.

religion seemed to be enjoying the results of the application of the scientific method to nature and still living contentedly in a religious house constructed by the deductive method of an earlier day. He wrote:

The first clearing made for a road leading out and away from a civilization based on the irrational opinions of convention and tradition was cut by the students of nature. In spite of fire on earth, with which they were threatened by the leaders of the Church, they continued to fell one after another the trees of traditional and dogmatic ignorance. Gradually they opened a highway. Timidly and tentatively at first the priest-ridden, state-ridden multitudes began to find their feet walking over the new road. This has continued until we see to-day all the civilized world traveling toward the coming noon of a great and glorious time over the highway built by the scientific method. The saints as well as the sinners have at last learned that the safest and surest and pleasantest track to follow is that lifted into view and made to gleam by the scientific method. Good, bad, and indifferent, all alike, now use street cars and the flying railway trains and the ocean palaces as conveniences of transportation. Both the avowed agnostic and the Christian missionary make their way now to the East by means of conveyance established by the scientific method. The only side of human life still regulated by vote instead of the facts and by traditional authority instead of by the essential realities of which the authorities have taken charge is the side of religion. Here the methods in vogue when doctors poured drugs of which they knew little into bodies of which they knew nothing still sway the mind.<sup>29</sup>

The same author draws this disparaging contrast between material and spiritual progress and lays the tardiness of religion to the charge of a wrong method:

It is inevitable that methods which have been so efficient

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<sup>29</sup> "The Religion of Science," p. 45. Revell.

in the study of nature should now be applied to the subject of religion. Thinkers have failed to reach the complete reality of man and God by self-devised theories as thoroughly as they failed for thousands of years to grasp the meaning of nature by imaginary methods. The facts of religion, when approached by the modern scientific method, are ready to yield results as rich for the spirit as have the facts of nature yielded results for the enrichment of our temporal well-being. We have sent over to the promised land the Calebs and Joshuas of physical science, and they have come back laden with purple grapes for the satisfaction of the body; but, instead of sending over other Calebs and Joshuas to find out what there is in Canaan for the spirit, we have been accustomed to turn back to wander in the wilderness, eking out a miserable existence on the manna our very wretchedness provokes from the pity of heaven. The picture may appear overdrawn, but it is not. We are reveling and luxuriating in the wealth science has won from the facts of nature, but how few there are who are rolling and growing great and magnificent in the wealth science can win from the facts of religion! The facts are overflowing with the religion the spirit needs, but we do not address ourselves to the consideration of them as we do to the facts of nature. Hence, our spirits hobble along on crutches, while our bodies fly through space in palace cars.<sup>30</sup>

If the scientific method met with opposition in its application to nature, it could not have expected an immediate welcome in the field of religion. Dr. Lee anticipated and answered the main objection:

It would hardly be safe to infer, however, because of the brilliant success of the scientific method in the realms of nature, that it will meet with no opposition when employed to systematize the realities of religion. Nature, it will be said, is common and passing and material. To invade her domain with the hard, cold methods of induction and deduction is proper. The phenomena of the human spirit, it will be thought, are on a different level entirely from those of the

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<sup>30</sup> "The Religion of Science," p. 141. Revell.

tangible world. There is nothing truer than this, but is it above and beyond the apprehension of reason? If so, then John Henry Newman was right in moving with all his spiritual belongings into the self-chosen prison of hard and ecclesiastically fixed dogma and denying to his reason the right to ask questions. Had this line been pursued three hundred years ago by the members of the Royal Society in regard to nature, doctors of the present time would still be pouring drugs of which they know little into bodies of which they know nothing. For it must be remembered that nature three hundred years ago was as completely encased in conceptions fixed by dogma as the realities of religion. If reason, by transferring nature from the domain of dogma to that of science, has increased a millionfold its power to help mankind, may it not follow that religion, when transferred by the scientific method from the domain of dogma to that of science, will gain by like proportion in power to help mankind?<sup>21</sup>

The facts of religion are just as real as any other facts. Faith, repentance, hope, love are as certain as lands and houses. The realm of religion is not a topsy-turvy region, in which things just happen. The movements of the spiritual life are orderly—they take place according to law—and the phenomena of religion can be observed and classified just as the phenomena of any other field of experience can. There are laws of spiritual well-being, and these laws can be ascertained as certainly and scientifically as the laws of nature can, so that a man may be told as certainly what he may expect from the operation of law in the realm of religion as he may be told what to expect through the operation of the laws of nature. In a book finished a few days before his death, Newman Smyth has this striking paragraph, the last sentence of which is especially worth noting:

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<sup>21</sup> "The Religion of Science," p. 32. Revell.

The real fundamentalists are the scientists, who go down as far as their researches may carry them through the evolution of life toward the beginnings of matter. Thus they are also modernists, as they have discovered a new world of whirling motions and attractions in the atom and also through their mastery of ethereal energies enable us through our radios to listen to what the poets have called the music of the spheres. The Protestant theologians would be false to their own faith in the Bible did they not search the Scriptures as far as modern historical researches may enable them to interpret them. Moses himself was a fundamentalist so far as he sought for foundations in the creation for his faith in God; he was also a modernist, as he went far beyond and above the mythologies of his day and with a great faith, though little knowledge, conceived of an orderly process of creation. Among the varieties of religious experience it is full time that we should recognize and welcome what may rightly be called scientific spirituality.<sup>32</sup>

The Reformation started in this direction, but it was arrested by a Protestant scholasticism which was not essentially different from the Catholic scholasticism of the Middle Ages. With the reformers, as with the early Christians, religion was a way of life opened up through the experience of salvation. Dr. Foster draws this parallel between Bacon and Luther:

At the outset it looked as if there was to be a similar movement in religion. Luther, for example, was a man of experience in religion, as Bacon in science. Indeed, it seemed at first as if the whole Reformation was to be a return from the age long dominant *a priori* procedure to direct observation of religious facts. The Reformation in many ways was a movement of experience. The reformers, to be sure, would keep intact the *spiritual* authority of the Scriptures, at the expense of the traditional

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<sup>32</sup> "Recollections and Reflections," p. 195. By Newman Smyth. Scribner's.

authority of Catholic dogma; and they also appealed to an historical argument—namely, the outstanding superiority of the original revelation. But where, ultimately, did the reformers find the guaranty of this argument and the badge of this superiority? In personal experience. When Luther, in the name of the Christian conscience, reënforced by the witness of the Bible, broke the iron bands of the papal system, he but undertook a similar work in another region, and applied the same method in another sphere, that Bacon, the English philosopher, introduced in science. Both Luther and Bacon, each in his place, desired to be true to the reality of facts. Therefore Bacon made what he called profane science; Luther, what he called religious truth, dependent on observation and experience.<sup>33</sup>

Let the theologian frankly adopt the scientific method, and his disadvantage before the attacks of science or infidelity ceases at once. The scientist is not at all embarrassed by the fact that many crude and ridiculous notions have been held by fore-runners in his field. He is not troubled when facts prove certain of his theories erroneous. He simply discards the untenable theory and endeavors to formulate another consistent with all the facts in hand. But the claim of infallibility causes the Roman Catholic theologian to cringe before the inroads which history is making upon dogma and the Protestant theologian to tremble at the discoveries of Biblical criticism. Both are in a pitiful plight, because they are trying to defend tradition against all comers. Macintosh points out the difficulties in the way of traditionalism:

The tragedy of any attempt to defend a whole body of traditional teaching is that the battles are inevitably fought

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<sup>33</sup> "The Finality of the Christian Religion," p. 190. By G. B. Foster. University of Chicago Press.



out at precisely those points where traditionalism is weakest and where successful defense is sure to prove impossible. He who stakes all upon the defense of the indefensible is courting disaster. Failure, as might have been anticipated, has been the fate of both the Catholic and the older Protestant apologetics. With Catholics the traditional content was the whole official teaching of the Church, including the Church's interpretation of the Bible. With Protestants what was to be defended was, in theory at least, the entire content of the Old and New Testaments, no more and no less. The scientific accuracy of the Genesis story of creation, the universality of the flood, the literal standing still of the sun at the command of Joshua, the bears destroying the lives of forty children as a punishment for mocking at a prophet's bald head, the imprecatory psalms, the command of God to slaughter all prisoners of war, including women and children, and to stone to death a son for disobedience and an old man for gathering sticks on the Sabbath—these are a few samples of the issues over which the older Protestantism felt obliged to fight out the defense of the Christian faith. "The Bible is God's Word. If you reject a single verse of Scripture, you treat God as a liar, and you might as well throw the whole book away." This is what was actually said, many a time no doubt, to young people who were beginning to think for themselves on religious questions. Historic Christianity was not regarded as a fountain from which each might drink according to his needs, but rather as if it were a reservoir which must be preserved from the slightest puncture lest all its contents should leak away.<sup>34</sup>

Let it be fully acknowledged that scientific religion is quite different from authoritative religion. The latter must defend all that has been handed down as binding, while the former takes its stand upon religious experience. While the content of tradition is being diminished all the while, as science destroys one erroneous tenet after another, the body

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<sup>34</sup> "The Reasonableness of Christianity," p. 3. By D. C. Macintosh. Scribner's.

of truth in scientific religion is constantly increasing, because there is no end to the observable facts which may be used as a basis for statement. The scientific theologian does not rely finally upon the fathers, or the pope, or the *ipse dixit* of any man, or upon chapter and verse, but upon an experience of reality. While he freely admits error when it is discovered, he is not alarmed for fear his system of truth may be destroyed; for while it may be diminished at one point, it is increasing at another.

Why is religion excluded from the educational system of this country? For no other reason than that the content of all the teaching of the public school system is arrived at through the scientific method, while the content of religious teaching has been derived from authority. The system of education is scientific, while the systems of religion have been authoritative. Education relied upon experience, while each denomination appealed to pope, book, or creed for the truthfulness of its religious convictions. Since there was this radical difference in method, it was impossible for education to recognize religion. But how can any system really educate, if it ignores the greatest of all forces and motives in human development? And yet how can a scientific system of education take notice of a religion which is based upon authority? When religion becomes scientific it will again find its place in the educational system. And religion must become scientific. The use of the scientific method will not only judge among the many sects and finally lead to a great religion of truth and power; it will also determine the relative value of the various religions

of the world and assess the sacred books of each at their true worth. Which is the true book, the Bible or the Koran? It can never be decided by the appeal of each to an authority which is not recognized by the other. Macintosh truly says:

Moreover, this method will mean the discovery of an ultimate and universally valid basis of appeal in mediating between the various religions of the world, with their more or less mythological theologies. Only the scientific method of testing inherited religious beliefs can be trusted to separate the gold of genuine religious truth from the dross of untenable dogma.<sup>35</sup>

The scientific method has been widely used in the study of religion's greatest literary product—the Bible. The canons of literary criticism by which all the world's literature is estimated must also apply to all sacred books; for, whatever else these books may be, they are certainly literary products which present the same problems of authorship, etc., that are raised in the study of all ancient books. The reader of any book in the Bible will ask himself such questions as: "Who wrote it? Is it poetry or prose; history or story? How nearly accurate is the history? What is the relative value of the various parts of Scripture?"

There has now been more than a hundred years of such study, and it has yielded a knowledge of the Bible more accurate and thorough than any other generation of the world has enjoyed. It is unfortunate that the Church has not been more hospitable to it. The scientific investigation of the Bible was inevitable. The work was going to be done by some-

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<sup>35</sup> "Theology as an Empirical Science," p. 44. By D. C. Macintosh. Macmillan.

body, and it would have been better for it to be done by men who understand the religion of the Bible rather than by coldly critical students who do not appreciate the spiritual content of the Book. Now, however, most Protestant scholars are freely using the scientific method. They realize that no book can be exempt from critical examination and that the Bible nowhere claims exemption. The Biblical writers of history depend upon sources for their facts, just as all other historians do. They either saw for themselves the incidents recorded, or they got their information through written or oral sources. Some of the historical portions are more difficult as history, because the writers did not aim to write pure history, but to moralize events by discovering the religious significance of them. This difficulty for the scientific historian is thus stated by Percy Gardner:

There were great historians in the ancient world. In their way Thucydides and Polybius have never been surpassed. Early Christianity substituted the Jewish view of history for the Greek; a remarkable retrogression; and for ages all history lost its scientific character under the influence of ethical and religious motives. Not until, within the memory of some still living, the idea of evolution was imported into historic studies did history set out on a new and scientific career. And even now, in the minds of the great majority of people, when the history of Christianity is in question, all historic method is thrown aside, and the historic views of the first Christians are accepted as of divine inspiration. But year by year this latter attitude of mind is receding, and the more scientific treatment of the sacred books and the early history of the Christian Church is becoming more usual; at least in all places of higher education.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> "The Practical Basis of Christian Belief," p. 13. Scribner's.

It may be worth while to indicate some of the assured results of critical study. Dr. E. Sellin, one of the most noted of modern German scholars, has this to say of the first five books of the Bible:

The Pentateuch forms the foundation for the whole edifice of Judaism. And for the Christian Church also it will always continue to be, on the one hand, the record of the Divine plan for the education of his people in the pre-Mosaic history and of the election and constitution of a people of God upon earth; and, on the other hand, a collection of the legislation which was the outcome of the Mosaic religious institutions during a period of nearly a thousand years and a record—conditioned of course by its historical development—of the holy will of God toward man, and of the law which “came in between” as a “schoolmaster to lead us to Christ” in order that thereafter “grace and truth” might the more gloriously abound.<sup>37</sup>

This reverent scholar presents the conclusions of critical scholarship concerning this portion of the Bible as follows:

The conclusion to which we are forced is that while all theories as to the number, origin, and age of the different sources are only working hypotheses, scientifically justified as such, the one absolutely established scientific fact which emerges is that the Pentateuch grew up in the post-Mosaic period out of the combination of several sources which were written in Palestine. That is the immovable basis on which Protestant Pentateuch criticism unanimously takes its stand at the present day.<sup>38</sup>

Concerning the composition of the book of Isaiah, he writes:

From the time when the question was raised by Eichhorn, in 1782, down to the middle of the last century, the authorship

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<sup>37</sup>“Introduction to the Old Testament,” p. 96. By E. Sellin. Doran. <sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 29.

of chapters 40-55 was long and vigorously debated, but it has now become a universally accepted result of Old Testament criticism that these chapters were not written by Isaiah, but by an unnamed author, who is usually designated Deutero-Isaiah, *toward the close of the Babylonian Exile.*<sup>39</sup>

The book of Jonah, which is regarded by Dr. Sellin as "one of the most precious jewels of Hebrew literature," because of its "universalistic teaching and its childlike faith in the Father and Bestower of mercy upon man and beast," does not "profess to be written by a prophet at all, but only to tell the story of a prophet and does so with a didactic purpose." Dr. Sellin says that the book of Daniel may be dated with the utmost probability about the end of 165 or the beginning of 164, and that its origin in the Maccabean period is proved to demonstration.

The critical study which began with the Old Testament had to pass on to the New, and significant and gratifying results in this field have been achieved. Since Christianity is a historical religion, it is vastly important to integrate the events which lie at the beginning of it into the solid texture of universal history. What the critical study of the New Testament has meant for the historic certainty of the events lying at the beginning of Christianity is indicated by Dr. Scott:

It has often been argued that since the evangelists, to whom we owe all our knowledge of the life of Jesus, wrote more than half a century after the event, we can place little reliance on their testimony. Until modern times this argument was almost unanswerable and caused the gravest misgivings in many devout minds. As a result of the critical inquiry it has now lost its force. It has been demonstrated, by a purely scientific analysis, that, although the Gospels are themselves

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<sup>39</sup> "Introduction to the Old Testament," p. 140. Doran.

late, they are compiled from records which were drawn much earlier, and which run back, in their main elements, to the years immediately following the Lord's death. Criticism has indeed made it clear that in our Gospels there are various strata, some of them of less historical value than others. But in its large result it has been constructive. We can now accept, not merely by an act of faith, but on the ground of strict historical evidence, the essential facts concerning the life of Christ.<sup>40</sup>

The Christian religion rests upon a broad basis of fact, and not upon the claim that the events which lie behind it were recorded in a mysterious manner which makes Bible history different from any other history. The reader may take up the Bible and go through its pages to see what there is in it without feeling that he must believe that every event occurred just as the narrator gives it. If the story of creation does not seem to square with geology, he may admit it and surmise that he has found a wonderful hymn of creation rather than a scientific treatise. "The Genesis of the Hebrew Testament," says William Scott Palmer, "is a great book. Compare its tradition of the beginning of things with any others in 'The Golden Bough' and you will confess that it is great. It is worthy of a great people. But it is not what it seemed once. Its cosmogony is poetry, not history. Now, in our new Genesis, we are unveiling facts of history and reading the true record of the world for the first time. It gives us a volume of the works of the supreme poet, whose epic is the universe."<sup>41</sup> If the deliverance from Egypt

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<sup>40</sup> "The First Age of Christianity," p. 57. By E. F. Scott. Macmillan.

<sup>41</sup> "Christianity and Christ," p. 81. By William Scott Palmer. Doran,

seems to be a highly dramatized account of actual history, there is no virtue in trying to carry a burden of credulity by insisting that the whole narrative is accurate to the point of minute detail. The reformers began with a principle which would have spared the Church endless uneasiness, if it had only been adhered to without compromise. Luther had a safe rule for testing all Scripture, "Does it preach Christ, does it ply Christ?" The historical parts of the Bible are measured by the canons of historical criticism; the moral and spiritual parts by their inherent vitality. However, the theory of a perfectly accurate book was hit upon to offset the theory of an infallible Church; but criticism discovered that the theory would not hold. And it has been learned that this theory is as needless as it is groundless, for the great trunk lines of fact in the Bible fit into the facts of universal history and of continued experience. Macintosh indicates what is taking place:

The untenability, from a critical point of view, of the traditionalistic notion of revelation, inspiration, and authority, and the barren abstractness of the rationalistic view, are driving theology back to the more original, yet possibly more permanent, religio-empirical approach, the hope being that it will be found feasible to substitute for the occult notions of primitive thought the scientific principles and methods of modern investigation. What is imperatively needed for the well-being of a religion is a basis in experience for a theology which shall again be at once both *natural* and *revealed*. Such a theology might well retain the vitality of historic religion even while it was achieving the validity of scientific method.<sup>42</sup>

There is no need to get nervous about the Bible. It has been here a long time, and it will be here long

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<sup>42</sup> "Theology as an Empirical Science," p. 106. Macmillan.



after its critics have crumbled into dust. There is no danger from careful examination of its contents. The only fear is that it may fall into neglect. If criticism should find that this, that, or the other event is improbable, the sum total of the historical content would not be affected. Perhaps Nero never fiddled while Rome burned; probably Julian never exclaimed, "O Galilean, thou hast conquered"; certainly George Washington did not cut down the cherry tree. But can anybody doubt that Nero was a persecuting Roman emperor; that Julian attempted to restore pagan worship; or that George Washington led the army of the Revolution to victory and became the first President of the United States? Elihu Grant says:

Whenever undue defense or patronizing care has been extended in a false or unnecessary solicitude, the Bible has fallen into comparative disuse, even if it has not met with abuse. Whenever the reverent genius of scientific research has gone along with untrammelled enjoyment of its riches, poetic, symbolic, moral, new value has been found increasingly. The worst treatment is to take up any question of the Bible in a partisan spirit, or to view its fate with any fear. The Bible will be there after all discussion, whether favorable or unfavorable. It must divest itself eventually of any dogmatic conclusion and start again on its career of influence by pure suasion. Investigation must be permitted to do its particular work in the ways which it finds available. And there remains much work for it to do. When we express our best judgment concerning any part of the Bible, or upon any Biblical question, it should be understood that we are doing so in the spirit of freedom for others as well as for ourselves, in order that no data of experience may be missing from the symposium.<sup>43</sup>

Scientific theology gets its material from actual

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<sup>43</sup> "Religious Foundations," p. 97. Edited by Rufus M. Jones. Macmillan.

experience. It is based upon the supposition that God and man are alive and in continual contact with each other. If this is true, theology ought to be as fruitful in results as any other science. Canon Streeter expects great things from the general use of the scientific method in religion:

God is there, wishing to speak to us, urgent to recreate us. What psychology has done is to unveil some little part of the mechanism through which God speaks and acts, provided that we do our part. Prophets and saints all testify that God *does* work, that vision appropriated in prayer does issue forth in power. These great souls, inheriting the rule-of-thumb experience of generations—interpreted by their own individual genius and resolution—did actually, though without clear understanding of its nature, make use of the appropriate psychological mechanism. But surely the dawning light of scientific understanding should make it possible in the future for men of quite ordinary capacity to accomplish practical results on a larger scale than was possible to them. So far from discrediting prayer, psychology has shown its rationality; and future discovery will doubtless help us better to distinguish between the methods which, so far as the human instrument is concerned, are likely to be the more or less effective. Tremendous are the problems which confront our age; civilization, think some, is tottering. But with new knowledge comes new hope; and it may be given to our age to see fulfillment in a new way of the ancient promise that he that believeth shall do "greater works than these."<sup>44</sup>

On the other hand, authoritative or speculative theology gets its material from the generalizations of other generations, as they are recorded in a sacred book or creeds. The corner stone of the traditional system, total depravity, is supported by some facts and some statements of Scripture. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

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<sup>44</sup>"Reality," p. 303. By B. H. Streeter. Macmillan.

"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." There are generalizations in the Bible, which the men who uttered them arrived at through observation and experience, and they have been taken over by speculative theology as final. But in the Bible and elsewhere there are other facts which make necessary a revision of these generalizations. The state of humanity is certainly bad enough in any case, and no one would attempt to deny the devastation that sin has wrought or the handicap which it places upon every child born into the world. But scientific theology goes behind the generalization and takes into consideration not only the facts that led to it, but all other facts that have a bearing upon the case. While speculative theology pores over texts, scientific theology studies babies. When the baby cries, it may be original sin—and then again it may be a pin.

The great New England revival under Jonathan Edwards was morbid, because the famous preacher held a system of theology which was deduced from "the fall of man" and the consequent total depravity of every child. As it continued on its course, an epidemic of suicide developed, and when it at last subsided Edwards explained "the gradual withdrawal of the Spirit" as having its beginning in a visit of the governor and the diversion from spiritual concerns occasioned by the labor of building a new meetinghouse. But the Spirit was not withdrawing; the people were only being called by the Spirit to the wholesome discipline of common interests and duties. It was a great revival. But New England never got over it. The religious revival is just as scientific as gradual growth, but it must be conducted according

to the laws of spiritual well-being, as they are ascertained through the scientific method.

Scientific religion has its hypotheses, just as other branches of science have, and the *Great Hypothesis* which it lays down is that *God is good*. It takes it for granted that life is a blessing—that it is better to be than not to be—and that the universe is Christ-like. This hypothesis is being verified continually in action. The course of procedure is exactly the same as in any other science. Dr. Lee shows how this hypothesis works out in practice:

Whatever is assumed to be true in the realm of thoughts, ideas, conceptions, sensations, feelings, and emotions that uniformly answers to act as though it were true is scientific. If we assume it to be true that God is good, that he is on the side of human progress toward ideal morality, and that if our will sets itself on the side of his goodness we all rise in the scale of existence; and if upon so acting we do, in fact, find ourselves rising from a lower to a higher level of life, we know that our assumption is scientific. If we assume it to be true that God is against what is base and mean, and that if our wills choose what is evil we will fall to a lower level than that of which we are capable, and find upon actually choosing what is bad we do, in fact, fall to a lower level of life, then we may know that our assumption was scientific.<sup>45</sup>

We are justified in laying down this hypothesis as provisional ground for action, for there are many obvious facts in human experience which point in this direction. There are also facts which point the other way, but as Streeter says, it is possible to have evil in a good world, while it is impossible to account for good in a bad world.

That the Infinite has a purpose, that the quality of Reality in the last resort is good, my mind against all perplexity and

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<sup>45</sup> "The Religion of Science," p. 169. Revell.

bafflement continues to assert. All around us are death and disease, cruelty and injustice, ugliness and stupidity. But death could not exist unless there were life, nor disease if there were no such thing as health. Evil is either conscious opposition to the good or the result of wrong conceptions of the good or of the way to attain to it. Evil would not be what it is save in contrast to, or distinction from, the good. The world is full of evil, but it is also full of good, and the nature of things is such that the good is the more fundamental of the two. Good might exist without evil, evil could not exist without good; for evil is either a parody of, or an obstacle to, good. Evil is parasitic. On that fact I take my stand. On this, in the last resort, I base my belief in God.<sup>46</sup>

God is infinitely trustworthy; he cares. This is the Great Hypothesis that is always being verified. It is never fully proved, it can never be fully proved, because the facts will be accumulating throughout eternity. But it is never disproved; it can never be disproved. No fact, however adverse, can disprove it, because even in the darkest hour there is always the hope of a coming dawn. Therefore the venture of faith is not tentative or reversible upon larger information. It is for good and all. In the soul's great decision, the die is cast, the Rubicon is crossed, the bridge is burnt behind, and God is taken as an eternal portion.

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<sup>46</sup> "Reality," p. 221. By B. H. Streeter. Macmillan.

V

THE POWER OF RELIGION



## V

### THE POWER OF RELIGION

RELIGION means power. It is the greatest creative force that has ever entered into human life. People are held and influenced by it as by no other interest. For the individual, for the community, and for the race it is the highest source of happiness and true success. If the crowd at the circus is larger than the congregation which meets for worship, it is because the circus comes once in a decade, while the church is open every Sunday. Religion is the most powerful agency available for lifting people above the dull and sordid routine of a material existence and enabling them to realize their kinship to God. It is the abiding interest of the race. It subsides from time to time only to recur with greater intensity than before. Nothing but religion can establish character and give man that sense of worth which enables him to triumph over the ills of life. Lewis Browne vividly describes the effect of faith upon all races and classes of men:

Strange potency, this thing we call religion! It has made men do barbarities quite beyond the reaches of credence. For it men have done foulnesses below the foulness done even by beasts. Yet for it also men have done benevolences such as transcend the benevolences of angels. If men have killed and died for religion, men have also lived for it. Not merely lived *for* it, but *by* it. That cowering Yemenite Jew slinking in the shadow of the archways sloughs off his terror and becomes a king when he enters his synagogue. His bent shoulders straighten, his sagging knees become firm, and the blessedness of peace lightens his eyes. That blind Arab beggar,



a mere frame of bones hung over with smelling rags, becomes a sultan when he stands at prayer in his mosque. He stands healed there of his ailments; he becomes a changed man with a vision reaching through his world to Paradise. That dark-eyed Syrian girl, poor trull whose lips have caressed the flesh of twenty races, becomes clean once more when she kneels at the feet of the virgin. Strength floods into her tortured bones, healing comes to her flesh. Life, so long a hell of lust and lechery, becomes now wondrously clean and worthy. She feels saved—*saved!*<sup>1</sup>

Excessive speculation upon metaphysical problems which lie beyond the range of human observation and the power of human solution has sometimes made religion seem impotent and inconsequential. A young Harvard student remarked reproachfully to a brilliant classmate who had told him he was going to enter the ministry, "I thought you would go in for something real." It is a mistake to look upon religion as something negligible, or an added burden to life's already too heavy load—as one more perplexity among many vexatious questions. Religion is a power to be used rather than a problem to be solved. The cause of much of the present distress in religious thinking is suggested by Canon Streeter:

By those who first heard it the Christian message was called "Gospel"—that is, "good news." It was so named because to them it did seem to give an answer both to the theoretical and to the practical questions. Life posed the riddle; religion had found an answer. Life has not ceased to pose its riddle; but who to-day has an answer which to the majority seems to have the authentic ring? Those who are without religion admit they have no answer. The Christian theologian stands on the defensive. Having once begun by asking the wrong question, he finds himself "defending the faith"; in effect,

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<sup>1</sup>"This Believing World," p. 22. By Lewis Browne, Macmillan.

he has got himself into the position of being anxious to save religion, instead of expecting religion to save him.<sup>2</sup>

There are two narratives in the New Testament which indicate the part that religion is to play in everyday life. The first presents the Mount of Transfiguration scene with its sequel and the second the return of the seventy. In the former the disciples are called from worship to work, while in the latter they are called from work to worship. "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles." But in the meantime the remaining disciples are down in the valley impotently wrestling with the problem of the afflicted boy. In the second incident the returning seventy said, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name." "Yes," Jesus replied, "I beheld Satan fall as lightning from heaven." The success of the disciples was the beginning of the end of satanic dominion. "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." Such power on earth was possible because there was contact with the skies. The disciples could do such work because they were in communion with God. The law of efficiency requires that we shall pass alternately from worship to work and from work to worship. Dean Tillett admirably expresses this law:

Those who are privileged to ascend the Mount of Transfiguration and participate in the glory there revealed are only human when they desire and ask to be permitted to build a

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<sup>2</sup>"Reality," p. 4. By Burnett Hillman Streeter. Macmillan,

tabernacle and abide there on the radiant mountain top of vision, basking in the smiles of their glorified Lord. But how does the Master answer their prayer? "Not so," we seem to hear him say; "not up here is your abiding place, but down yonder in the lowlands of toil and dust and heat, where the poor, the suffering, the sinful, the possessed of devils are clamoring for some one to help them. There is your work; it is that you may the better do it that I have given you this vision and this divine anointing. Go in my name and, through the power you have received, cast the devils out of souls enslaved to sin and Satan. And forget not, as you work, that this kind cometh not forth except by prayer and self-denial."<sup>3</sup>

Worship without work becomes aimless and vain; work without worship is tedious and ineffectual; but when the two are properly balanced life is rich in experience and full of power. Wieman gives the reason for retaining both the freedom of worship and the routine of toil:

It is not enough that each individual should give a certain portion of his time to the exercise of disciplined and efficient habits in some productive work, while another portion of his time is given over to free impulse. To keep the two separated, neither influencing the other, is disastrous to both and to life generally. The chief value of free impulse is that it may make possible some larger measure of spontaneity, creativity, interest, and joy in productive work. And the chief value of disciplined habit, over and above the production of necessary utilities for consumption, is that it will so direct free impulse that the latter will produce materials and conditions for its own progressive amplification. Free impulse, wholly bereft of the guidance of disciplined habit, destroys itself. It gets nowhere; it becomes vapid and inane, like blowing bubbles that flicker out as soon as produced. Furthermore, it soon begins to consume more than it produces, unless checked. But worst of all, free impulse without guidance of disciplined

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<sup>3</sup>"Providence, Prayer, and Power," p. 331. By W. F. Tillett. Cokesbury Press.

habit falls into conflict, one impulse destroying the good of another. Free impulses become nothing but vanity and vexation of spirit when wholly separated from disciplined habit, but disciplined habit becomes a horror of soul-killing routine when wholly separated from free impulse.<sup>4</sup>

There are two levels of experience, corresponding to the geographical levels of the mountain and the plain. On the mountain top the atmosphere is pure and clear; the surroundings are calm, peaceful, restful, and inspiring. Down on the plain there is dust, and the air is filled with noise and confusion. On the height the mind partakes of eternal rest; in the valley it feels the annoyance and din of work. There is a heavenly region of unbroken peace, calm, and spiritual power; and there is an earthly region of work, worry, trouble, sorrow, vexation, and toil.

Man lives in both of these worlds. He is in contact with God above and with the outward world around. He is different from all other beings in that these two worlds meet in him, making it necessary for him to adjust himself to both. There is no hard and fast border between them. We cannot draw a line of demarcation between the natural and the supernatural and say where one ends and the other begins. The two worlds interpenetrate each other; each is the other. Both are aspects of the same reality.

We are certainly on the earth, and we cannot forget this part of our environment for a moment. We are reminded every time we cross a street that we must either get on or get under. If we remain

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<sup>4</sup>"Religious Experience and Scientific Method," p. 125.  
By H. N. Wieman. Macmillan.

oblivious to the demands of our material relationships too long, we find ourselves a charge upon the county. Daily observation shows that the connections with our earthly surroundings must be kept up if we are to live successfully. We are also in touch with God. We just as certainly have connections with a heavenly world. That is what religion means. That is what it must mean, if it is to have any meaning at all and continue to hold its place in human life.

Worship is the act of directing attention to God, who always attends to us, whether our minds are upon him or not. This communion is real. It brings us into touch with the invisible, objective God. We shut our eyes in worship, not that we may commune with ourselves, but that we may shut out the world of detail and commune with the whole. There is nothing more reasonable in all human experience than that the individual should have actual fellowship with the Supreme Reality. Why the inward urge to worship God, if there is no outward pull? "The prayers I make shall then be prayers indeed, if thou the Spirit give, by which I pray." Whence the gracious command, "Seek ye my face," evoking the heart's glad response, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek," if there is no reality in prayer?

God is more widely experienced, though often less definitely known, than any other being. Here religion takes its stand. Here it finds its origin and sustenance—the reason for its existence. This direct experience of God is of supreme importance. Communion with the divine is religion's vital breath and native air. It is the condition of any knowledge that can be acquired of the divine. Wieman well says:

With respect to the knowledge of God we feel that it is very important to distinguish between knowledge that we have experienced God and knowledge of what sort of object God is. Of these two stages of knowledge, the knowledge that we have experienced God is primary and most important. The value of clearly distinguishing the datum of religious experience is that it enables us to know that we experience God. All the values of religion *per se*, as distinguished from theology, religious philosophy, and religious ethics, is to be gotten from this experience of God. The values of this religious experience can be immeasurably enhanced by proper ideas about God; hence none can prize more highly than we a good theology, philosophy, and ethics. But all these ideas about God cannot enhance the value of the experience if we do not have the experience. Without the experience we have no religion at all. With the experience we may have a very bad sort of religion because of our false or inadequate ideas about God—namely, our philosophy, ethics, and theology. But no matter how excellent these latter may be, we have no religion at all if we do not have the experience. We must develop a better theology, philosophy, and ethics. But, most important of all, we must cultivate religious experience, which is acquaintance with God.<sup>5</sup>

Why is God not more definitely known? If he is accessible to all, and all men have had more or less contact with him, why is it that men have not understood him better? Why have the vast majority of people lived and died without any adequate conception of the divine nature and purpose? Why have Christian missionaries had to carry the news of saving love to distant lands, if God is as really present at one place as another? Wieman answers such questions as follows:

In our experience of God there is a merging of many experiences, and just that form which gives us the datum

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<sup>5</sup> "Religious Experience and Scientific Method," p. 40. Macmillan.

signifying God is not clearly distinguished from that which gives us our knowledge of earth and sky, and fellow man, and social group. Now of course this merging of many phases of experience is inevitable, not only in the case of God, but in the case of everything else. When we have a visual experience of a stone we also, in the same situation, experience the light and hence the sun, also the earth and sky, and heaven knows what all. All these are merged in our experience of the stone. But in the case of the stone we have learned how to distinguish between that phase of experience which can be said to be data pertaining to stone and that phase which is data pertaining to sun, etc. There is probably an infinite wealth of data merged in any ordinary experience, but we have learned to distinguish and select from this infinite wealth those data which enable us to adapt ourselves to stones and trees and hills and make inference concerning them. But with respect to our experience of God we have not learned to do this with so much clarity.<sup>6</sup>

The experience of God must be clarified by observation and experiment. The Object of faith must be differentiated from the confusing details which accompany the revelation of the divine through personal contact. God becomes better known as each man learns more of himself, his world, the history of the human race, great religious characters—above all, of Jesus Christ, who fully embodied and expressed the life of God in human form. Through our ever-enlarging experience, we, both as individuals and as a race, are knowing God better all the time.

This contact with God is the highest source of power. Genuine worship always brings power. Whenever the individual attends to God, he is strengthened; whenever a group of individuals engage in worship, members of the congregation can

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<sup>6</sup>“Religious Experience and Scientific Method,” p. 30. Macmillan.

feel the presence of spiritual power. This power always comes. It comes through a spiritual law as certain in its operation as the law of gravitation. As Antæus felt his strength return as often as his feet touched ground, so every man feels his spiritual strength renewed as he comes into contact with God. Worship is the life of religion, and reality in worship is the one thing to be sought and retained. A merely formal service in the interest of spiritual culture does not prepare the soul for the great crises of life. Many a man has tuned his formal songs year after year only to find in the hour of great distress that he has not had replenishing contact with the living God. "And he awoke out of his sleep and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him."

Worship is the one creative act of human life. It is the point at which the divine enters freely into the human and opens up new areas of experience of reality. Religion should be the servant of every legitimate aim, but subservient to none. Worship lifts the individual into the freedom of the children of God and sends him out into the world to become the willing servant of all. But when worship is merely formal, religion loses its originality and autonomy and becomes a department of state and a support of life upon the merely human level. As paradoxical as it may sound, it is true that religion can render greatest service to man only when it renders primary service to God. Wieman has this to say of the prostitution of religion to merely human uses:

A religion which is devoted exclusively to the promotion of human welfare, as current opinion has defined human wel-



fare, becomes a servant to the prevailing arts and sciences. Its God becomes identified with the values which the people of that time and place have come to recognize. Religion then becomes the great sustainer of the customs and traditions, the arts and sciences, that constitute the civilization of the time. Such a religion cannot be a transformer or revolutionizer. Such religion cannot point men to other values on beyond those goods which they seek in their everyday lives. Such a religion is not a master of the prevailing civilization, but a servant. Such a religion cannot usher in a new day; it can only help to perpetuate an old day. The voice of God, in such a religion, is merely the echo of what the custom and the sciences declare. When the statesman or the scientist says that such and such a matter is good, it becomes the business of such a religion to respond, "Thus saith the Lord," and so herd the masses into conformity with the dictates of scientist and statesman. It was such a religion that the Roman Cæsars tried to bring to perfection in demanding that all men worship Cæsar as God. The Romans were intensely practical people, and their religion was a practical religion. No mystical nonsense for them.<sup>7</sup>

True religion does not follow docilely in the wake of civilization. It opens up larger and richer fields of life. It moves forward as a pioneer into the great unknown and brings back a report of realities that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard," and it ever demands the right to be true to the heavenly vision. Governments which have regarded their own existence as the supreme end have always held religion in suspicion, because they felt that in it they had to reckon with an incalculable force. They could never know when religion might lead out in a direction contrary to their purposes. The Roman emperors were hostile to Christianity for a good reason. They looked upon themselves as divine exponents of a di-

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<sup>7</sup>"Religious Experience and Scientific Method," p. 255. Macmillan.

vine state, while the early Christians worshiped God alone. Christianity is not a practical religion in the sense that it always stands ready to further the schemes of existing organizations and institutions. It is as likely to pulverize them in the interest of the growing ideals of the kingdom of God. "These tremendous transformers of human ways of living have come, after spending forty days and nights in worship, saying, 'Ye have heard of old time, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you, Love your enemies.'" These revolutionists, who "cultivate the presence of God for God's sake," cannot be counted upon to fit into the scheme of unscrupulous politicians who ignore the rights of other nations in expanding their own, or of those Napoleons of finance who prey upon the public or exploit the masses to increase their own wealth. "Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve the Lord our God; and we know not with what we must serve the Lord, until we come thither."

There is great danger in the tendency to keep the world of human need apart from the world of heavenly power. The disposition to separate between the divine and the human and to divorce the sacred from the secular always threatens to build up an organization of secluded saints and leave vast stretches of commercial, social, and political activity unaffected by the saving power of religious inspiration. The result of this separation is an artificial and powerless Church in a godless world. Sorley thus warns against the attempt to produce values without taking into consideration the total will of God:

Human nature is so imperfectly unified that a man may show high devotion to one region of values and treat all the others with neglect or contempt. But he does so at his peril. He loses thereby his own chance of developing a complete and harmonious character, and he risks also his perfection in the art or science of his choice. Morality cannot be isolated from any part of life. The ideas of good and evil which direct the lives of men are also formative influences upon their artistic production in picture or poem or building. Nor can knowledge claim to be completely independent of character. Character determines interest, and interest selects its objects and its method. It was not mere fancy that led theosophist and alchemist to hold that the mind that would find out the hidden things of the world must be purged from bodily and selfish desire, and that the philosopher's stone can be touched by none but clean hands. Only the pure in heart can see God.<sup>8</sup>

How can we bring the power, generated through contact with God, down into the region of ordinary life and harness it to the tasks that confront us in our daily toil? This is the great and pressing problem of religion. There is a world of care and evil, and there is certainly a world above it of inexhaustible power. How can the two be brought into contact with each other? The aim of religion is to make the connection. "Thy kingdom come." How can we lay hold upon the resources of God and release them upon the actual situation in which men live? We expect to get to heaven in the by and by. How can we bring heaven into the earth below, while we are on our way to the heaven above? This is the problem that Christianity set for itself when it first appeared. And while the task was appallingly great and apparently impossible, the actual achievements

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<sup>8</sup>"Moral Values and the Idea of God," p. 511. By W. R. Sorley. Macmillan.

toward the desired end are written in the most marvelous records of this planet. The author of "This Believing World" notes some of the hindrances and pays generous tribute to the effect of Christianity upon a wicked and quarrelsome race:

The history of Europe, with all its wars and recurrent brutalities, can hardly be called the history of a civilized continent. Even the Church itself, with its foul record of crusades and inquisitions and pogroms, cannot be said to have ever been really civilized. But that admission does not at all discredit the potency of the spirit of Jesus. It merely reveals how tremendous were the odds against it, how brutal was the world it sought to make divine. True, there were indeed Dark Ages in Europe when the power of the Church was at its height. But who knows how far darker they might have been, and how much longer they might have endured, had the Church not existed? True, there were indeed religious wars early and late in Christendom, but who knows how much bitterer and more devastating they might have been had they been tribal or racial wars. For wars were inevitable. A world with too little food and too much spleen simply *had* to fight. If religious differences had not been at hand, other excuses would have been found for warring. And because those other excuses would have been deeper-rooted and more primitive, they would no doubt have brought on infinitely more dreadful desolations. Wars for Christ, after all, could never be fought with a blood-lust utterly free and untrammelled. Their virulence was always partially sapped by the innate irony of their pretensions. The insistent pacifism of him in whose name those wars were fought could not but have had some tempering influence. None can doubt that the adoration of a Prince of Peace, the worship of a Good Shepherd, even though drugged almost dead with ritual, must have had a profound effect on the people. None can doubt that the veneration of a gentle, loving, helpless youth as the very incarnation of perfection must have been as ice to the hot blood of the race.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>"This Believing World," p. 297. By Lewis Browne. Macmillan.

All this has been accomplished in spite of the fact that the Church took over many elements from the paganism with which it was surrounded. While the pure spirit of true religion was never wholly lost, it was beclouded by superstition, human sinfulness, and ecclesiastical ambition, and the Church was shunted from the main road of salvation through fellowship with God into blind alleys of error and oppression. What might have been achieved, if the great Head of the Church had had his way, can only be imagined. Jesus Christ could have done for all what he did for those who understood him and entered into his spirit. Browne says, further:

The story of Christianity is long and bewildering, for it stretches through twenty centuries and is written in a hundred tongues. In part it is a story of almost incredible rapacity and bitterness, of incessant war and intrigue and low, greedy self-seeking. But in far larger part it is a story of wondrous kindness and saving grace. Though the Church of Christ may stand guilty of untold and untellable evil, the religion of Jesus, which is the little light glimmering behind that ecclesiastical bushel, has accomplished good sufficient to outweigh that evil tenfold. For it has made life livable for countless millions of harried souls. It has taken rich and poor, learned and ignorant, white, red, yellow, and black—it has taken them all and tried to show them a way to salvation. To all in pain it has held out a balm; to all in distress it has offered peace. To every man without distinction it has said, *Jesus died for you!* To every human creature on earth it has said, *You too can be saved!* And therein lies Christianity's highest virtue. It has helped make the weak strong and the dejected happy. It has stilled the fear that howls in man's breast and crushed the unrest that gnaws at his soul. In a word, it has worked—in a measure.<sup>10</sup>

With the actual situation before them, it is pos-

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<sup>10</sup> "This Believing World," p. 300. Macmillan.

sible for people to linger too long at their devotions. "Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." Peter liked the atmosphere on the mount of transfiguration. He was pleased with the company. "Let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." He would have been glad to make of that place his permanent abode. But he could not do this while the anxious father down on the plain was distressed over an epileptic child. Great experiences come to those on the mountain top at times, and the soul feels in that atmosphere as if it could

Sit and sing itself away  
To everlasting bliss.

But spiritual power must be deliberately turned from mere enjoyment to practical work. It would be religious dissipation and gross misuse of opportunity to expend in ecstasy the spiritual power gained through worship, while the world lies in impotence, poverty, and despair. These unusual experiences are genuine; they are true phenomena of the spiritual life. They are not to be discounted as spurious, though they are liable to abuse, and the popular estimate of them is more nearly correct than that of the skeptic who attributes them solely to the aberrations of the mind. Wieman passes this discriminating judgment upon this aspect of religious experience:

Now, of course, any awareness that cannot be communicated and tested will offer a great opportunity for tricksters and quacks, and these have no doubt often availed themselves of the opportunity. But the very nature of simple awareness

makes this inevitable, and the existence of such quacks cannot disprove the genuineness of such awareness on the part of some. Indeed, it is because more or less of this awareness exceeding the bounds of common sense is so widespread that these quacks have so much success. The people who are duped are often those who have just enough of themselves to make them readily believe one who claims to have more of the same thing. But are these "dupes" to be pitied more than the hard-headed individuals who never glimpse anything in heaven or earth, save those few clear-cut bits of natural furniture which common sense has so definitely set up as the whole world in which we live and amid which they have learned to live with almost as much comfort and solid contentment as the beasts. It is not they who are likely to be deceived by a false prophet, but those who have glimpsed that which the prophet claims to see.<sup>11</sup>

However, it is none the less true that such experiences, when carried to excess, mean wasted power, and they leave the impression upon the public mind that religion lays great stress upon abnormal psychological phenomena and pays little attention to the tasks of the common day. A few years ago a marvelously eloquent preacher carried his congregation away upon such flights of spiritual fancy that they were completely lost. Some began to shout, others to cry, and a few got down on all fours and began to crawl about the pulpit upon their hands and knees. As these acts were being described to the writer by an enthusiastic admirer of the famous preacher, he could not refrain from asking, "What for?" *Cui bono?* Why should such unreasoned and aimless action be taken for spiritual excellence? Such occasions are rare. What if they were quite frequent? Would religion be the better off? Would it have one

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<sup>11</sup> "Religious Experience and Scientific Method," p. 194. Macmillan.

whit more power to bring the race to sanity and peace? Once a preacher had a wonderful revival at a certain church. People crowded the altar at every service without waiting for a sermon to be preached. But that was the only revival of the kind that that Church has ever had, and it was the only one of its kind that that preacher ever conducted. Such a meeting may come to a Church once in a generation, but there is no telling when it will come or whether it will come at all, and consequently the Church cannot depend upon that sort of a revival for the increase of its membership and the renewal of its spiritual vitality. The normal way is not so boisterous, and it is really better for all concerned that the Church be sober and sane.

Recently the papers contained two press dispatches relative to this subject within the same week, one from Russia and the other from South Dakota. The item from Russia gave an account of the interference on the part of the police of four districts of Georgia with a religious movement which for nearly a year had disrupted the economic life of hundreds of farming communities and caused the loss of thousands of tons of grain. The police action cut short an epidemic of pseudo-epilepsy which had disabled hundreds. The movement started with the report of a poor peasant, who swore to the assembled village that a pot of black gruel jumped off the stove and hit him in the face and proved the miracle by pointing to his face, which was covered with gruel. He was sure the pot had hit him in punishment for his failure to obey the Holy Virgin, who had appeared to him twelve years before and ordered him to dig for holy relics in a field back of the church. Everybody in



the village immediately declared that the peasant had the element of sainthood in him, and the entire population stopped all work to repair to the churchyard, where they dug for relics. A number of bones were found and installed in the local church with great enthusiasm. News of the discovery spread to the surrounding parishes, and the church became a shrine for pilgrims and the center of the greatest "religious" movement known in Georgia during the last century. The item from South Dakota relates that a committee of business men rescued a woman who had remained tied to her bed for three days while the members of a religious cult made weird gestures and shouts to "extract the devil" from her body. When found by the committee the woman had been without food for five days and was in a hypnotic state. The group of religious practitioners, made up of farmers living in the neighborhood, was shouting fanatically when the committee arrived and had to be forced from the house.

Religion has always been in danger of formalism on the one hand and fanaticism on the other. Why is it that so many religious people are either at a dead balk or running away? In ancient times great value was attached to the abnormal psychological aspects of worship, and this attitude presented the greatest obstacle that the prophets encountered in their effort to moralize religion. Isaiah would have nothing to do with wizards that "peep" and "mutter," and Paton declares that the prophets deliberately wiped out belief in immortality in their determination to remove necromancy from the people's worship. In his book on "Spiritism and the Cult of the Dead in Antiquity," this writer says: "Spirits of the

dead, like 'strange gods,' were at first dangerous rivals of Yahweh, and his adherents labored for their destruction. In this process the dead were deprived of one attribute after another, until at the end of the prophetic-legal development they had become powerless shadows, whose existence was destitute of every element that constituted life. Thus the victory over necrolatry was won, but at the cost of the extinction of even a rudimentary belief in immortality. Primitive Semitic animism had nothing in common with Yahwism, and it was necessary that it should perish before the structure of a better faith could arise."<sup>12</sup> Religion is not benefited by the weird, strange, peculiar, sensational, and abnormal. Whitehead truly says:

Religious truth must be developed from knowledge acquired when our ordinary senses and intellectual operations are at their highest pitch of discipline. To move one step from this position toward the dark recesses of abnormal psychology is to surrender finally any hope of a solid foundation for religious doctrine.<sup>13</sup>

This is the way the prophets went. They shunned the dark tricks of soothsayers and the senseless ravings and hypnotic spells of heathen fakers, relying upon the intelligent apprehension of observable facts for the content of their messages. Religion's way out does not lie in the direction of abnormal psychology. Wieman strongly urges that all attempts to establish faith upon freakish manifestations of religious experience be avoided. He thus refers to a suggestion of William James:

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<sup>12</sup> The Macmillan Company.

<sup>13</sup> "Religion in the Making," p. 123. By A. N. Whitehead. Macmillan.

James suggests that "if there be higher spiritual agencies" they cannot be found in the world of sense. Things material must exclude things spiritual; we must turn away from the material world, close all the senses that yield us knowledge of it, and find some hidden other sense which will give us knowledge of the spiritual world. Here is that pitiful blunder that always leads to confusion. Here he has put his feet to that path that leads out into the morass where nothing but dreams and will-o'-the-wisps can be found. Turn from the wide-awake consciousness of sense, which gives us knowledge of the material world, and turn to the consciousness of sleep, turn to dreams, to "the Dreamy Subliminal," and perhaps there we can find the spiritual. As sure as any one turns down that way, clear-headed thinking sooner or later will show him to be following illusions, phantasies, and myths. James did not himself go that way. But with that broad sympathy and marvelous acquaintance with all the ways of the human heart, he recognized this to be the way so dear to many, and, in passing, acknowledged it to be a way which some might wish to follow; and he would not close the path to them.<sup>14</sup>

These phenomena, which recur from age to age and break out sporadically in all parts of the world, were frequent in early Christianity. The great apostle to the Gentiles nowhere shows his sound common sense more clearly than in his manner of dealing with those Corinthian saints who looked upon the ability to "speak with tongues" as a token of divine favor and a sure mark of spiritual excellence. Glover has this illuminating paragraph upon the subject:

From the first advent of Dionysos to Greece down to John Wesley's preaching at Kingswood, and indeed later, men have been confused and perplexed by physical phenomena which cross the work of religion. A man is deeply moved to contrition or to acceptance of Christ, a movement primarily

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<sup>14</sup>"Religious Experience and Scientific Method," p. 317. Macmillan.

of the mind, stirred by thought and emotion; and then something else breaks in, and he falls in trance, as John Wesley's hearers sometimes did. Or else, whether he loses control of his speech or gains control of another tongue, he begins to give utterance to sounds unfamiliar. This, to people who have never seen it before and whose psychology is very simple, is a perplexing thing to explain, and they fall back on the hypothesis of the intervention of a spirit. But even so the critics retain some hold of canons which they know better—if the person "possessed" is blasphemous, for instance, it is an evil spirit; otherwise it may be the Holy Spirit. There is evidence of an outcrop of such phenomena in Corinth, and it is held that everything was being sacrificed to secure manifestations of prophecy and speech "with tongues." Paul intervened. He was not in possession of modern views of psychology, but he had sense, and he was practical. What was being effected by all this to win men for Christ? Did the unintelligible confusion of spirit-filled gatherings clarify the appeal of Christ? Was it consonant with the gospel or with the Holy Spirit, when a man under the influence of some spirit announced that "Jesus was accursed"? He owns that he also spoke with tongues, a confession to which we must return later; but, he asks, what is the real use of it? He puts in the plea of edification, the real plea of getting some foundation laid on which life can be built, centered as ever in Christ; and the spiritual occurrences begin to look very irrelevant. The "tongues" might be the "tongues of angels" (he does not admit this), but in any case love is more significant. However mystical in temperament or in mind Paul might be, he could not forget the work to which he was called. Christ was to control his thoughts, and Christ did. These confusing phenomena are not in the gospel—nor, we may note, in the Gospels; they came from the heathen world, not the Jewish. They were irrelevant to the real work of the Church; that was their condemnation. Modern psychology confirms it by showing their more or less physical origin, their wide diffusion among races of lower culture, and their growing rarity with the growth of inhibition. Inhibition has a scientific sound, "the obedience of Christ" a theological; but Paul and the men of science on different lines have reached the same con-

clusion, and the fact that they have gone on lines so different confirms their conclusion.<sup>15</sup>

Since there is always a probability of a recurrence of this glossolalian ecstasy, and any unlettered community is in more or less danger of being led astray by its glamour, it may be well to quote the opinion of another careful observer upon its value:

In the earlier and less critical days of experimental religion it was customary to interpret various physiological effects of such highly emotional experiences as were common in religious circles as being the direct and evidential products of the divine action. But these effects have often been so valueless, judged from a spiritual point of view, that it has come to be intuitively felt that they are not so much a revelation of divine power as they are a manifestation of human weakness. They are now regarded as mere surplus-effects or by-products of religious emotion, coupled with the influence of suggestion; ordinarily, the divine direction is not discernible in them at all. Indeed, even Paul, who recognized that they had originated in a religious experience which was fundamentally divine, and who consented accordingly to speak of them as being, at least under some conditions, "gifts of the Spirit," spoke disparagingly of such phenomena as the much-coveted "speaking with tongues," and laid down the principle that God is not to be regarded as the author of disorder and confusion.<sup>16</sup>

At the opposite pole from ecstatic elation is the despair which accompanies brooding over sin. While Christianity requires candid self-examination and confession of sin upon the part of every man who would experience the salvation which faith in Jesus Christ brings, it does not teach that every person

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<sup>15</sup> "Paul of Tarsus," p. 158. By T. R. Glover. Doran.

<sup>16</sup> "Theology as an Empirical Science," p. 154. By D. C. Macintosh. Macmillan.

conscious of his sinfulness should go mourning all his days over transgressions which lie in the past, forever beyond recall. It is not consistent with belief in the fatherly love of God to "court conviction of sin" for fear the experienced conviction is not "deep enough" to warrant forgiveness, and it is positively harmful to keep the sins of the past continually in mind. The thing to do with the sin of the past is to repent of it—and forget it. These words of Streeter are profoundly true: "In current religious teaching there is an idea directly contrary, as it seems to me, to the teaching of Christ about God, and no less contrary to the lessons of modern psychology. I mean the idea that we should continually brood upon our sins and work ourselves up into agonies of contrition about them." The past cannot be mended by brooding over its mistakes and failures, nor can a man be rescued from his sin while morbidly dwelling upon it. Escape lies along the way of fixing the attention upon the life that has been made possible through the presence of divine help in Jesus Christ.

Another way of avoiding the practical application of divine power is to take religious experience merely as an object of thought and spend the main strength of the mind in systematizing the objects created by a fertile imagination. We may start with a modicum of genuine experience, and then move out from it into wider and wider fields of speculation, until we lose sight of the experience altogether. That is the course taken by the schoolmen of the Middle Ages. There is great danger in discussing and arguing over questions that cannot be brought within the range of

experience, and the endless arguments over such questions as predestination, angels, demons, and the final destiny of saints and sinners may leave the impression that religion is a matter to be talked about rather than to be lived. The preacher who is gifted in expression or dialectic may allow his fluency to lead him so far away from reality that his sermons will become as lifeless as a painted sheep, cropping painted grass upon a painted pasture. Religion is not mainly something to be discussed; it is a power which is to be utilized in reaching abundance of life. The safe course for the preacher, whose very calling keeps him talking constantly about religion, is to make his words truly express an experience which he has already had or point to spiritual regions which he is earnestly striving to enter. Dr. Coffin gives this illustration:

No man can interpret a scripture save as he shares in some degree the experience which the scripture enshrines. In our American railway stations there is a functionary who with the aid of a megaphone announces outgoing trains, naming their destinations and stops and the track where they may be boarded. On an oppressive summer day one will hear the announcer in a city terminal calling to the waiting travelers the enticing names of mountain and seaside resorts and summoning them to entrain. But the announcer himself will stay in the sweltering station, without glimpse of forest or ocean, without a breath of their quickening air, and his life long he will not likely visit more than half a dozen of the places which he mentions glibly several times a day. God forbid that you and I should spend our lives telling the experiences of prophet and lawgiver, psalmist and sage on the heights of vision and in the secret places of comfort and of power, and the experiences of disciples in the presence of incarnate God,

and be ourselves strangers to the everlasting hills and aliens to the heart and conscience of Jesus Christ.<sup>17</sup>

Still another way of keeping religion from having its due effect upon life is to turn from the ugly and disagreeable situations of the actual world into regions of fancy in which we may build New Jerusalems *ad libitum*, unembarrassed by the stubborn materials out of which the heaven on earth must be made. A woman living in a back alley finds that the roof of her cabin is leaking; the plaster is falling down, the floor is covered with dirt, the neighbors are quarrelsome, and her husband is out of work. Despairing of a comfortable, tidy home, she sits down in a corner, closes her eyes, and dreams of a castle in Spain. That is relief by way of apocalyptic. This way of avoiding the stern and staggering realities of the actual world attained its greatest vogue in the century preceding the Christian era, and it has provided a way of escape for some highly imaginative souls in every generation since that day. God is absent, but he will come. Nobody knows why he stays so far away and remains so strangely impotent while his enemies trample his earthly vineyard, but sooner or later he will appear and lay bare his mighty arm. A dear old brother sat in the writer's study and unfolded the future layer by layer until he reached the day of judgment. It was all scheduled to the very day, in Daniel and Revelation. After talking for over an hour, he leaned over the table which stood between us and with gruff and powerful voice exclaimed, "But you are not believing a

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<sup>17</sup> "What to Preach," p. 43. By Henry Sloane Coffin. Doran.



word I am saying." "No, brother," I acknowledged, "not a word." And yet apocalyptic has this value: It enables those to believe still in God who, because of the world's countless tragedies, have to think of him either as absent or nowhere.

Jesus found the people's minds full of apocalyptic visions—not all of them, but the great majority. The situation that faced the Jews of that day was literally terrible. What must they do? Wait in helpless and actionless expectation of the coming of the promised Messiah? Hurl themselves blindly against the solid ranks of Rome and fight with all their might in the hope that their futile effort would hasten Messiah's coming? Jesus declared that neither of these ways would improve their condition. He told them that the thing to do was to turn the whole power of religion upon the situation. But what could they do with the hated Roman? *Love* him. Love is religion's mightiest power—its last weapon of offense and defense. When it fails, there is no use to try any other. But that was just what they did not want to do—would not do. Love the Roman! the godless Gentile whose vile foot was on the neck of God's chosen people! No! A thousand times, no! One of their own descendants utters with tragic sob the result:

Poor desperate wretches, they were in no mood to seek peace or return good for evil, or turn the other cheek. They did not want to render unto Cæsar that *which* was Cæsar's. They wanted to kill. They wanted to make a holocaust of the whole Roman army and to become once more a free and prideful nation! . . . They who were strong of body and fiery of temper could look forward to no salvation save one wrested by the sword. These were called Zealots, and they went up and down the land attacking lone Roman garrisons,

murdering Roman sympathizers, plotting, protesting, fighting, dying, all to bring on by brute force the reign of peace. And what they brought on in the end was only a bloody debacle, a final conflict that simply wiped out the Jewish nation and scattered its hapless survivors to the four corners of the earth.<sup>18</sup>

It takes contact with both worlds to make character. "It is easy," says Emerson, "in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude." If you turn to the world and live in it alone, you become material and gross and lose your soul. If you turn to God and attempt to attend to him alone, you become mystical, remote, pale, abstracted, and detached, because you fail to follow God into the world, where he is doing the only work that it is possible for you to help him to do. The sensualist and the "saint" err in opposite directions. Because the asceticism of the Oriental world became the mark of sainthood early in Christian history, it has turned out that a saint is a person whom everybody is supposed to admire, but nobody would care to be like. And in so far as the saints of Protestantism have been pallid mystics, absorbed in acts of devotion, and as helpless in the practical world as babes in the wood, they are equally unattractive. Wesley never enjoyed the experience of "saintliness." He was too busy.

Our business as men of religion is to keep in touch with God and hold ourselves to the task of improving the world. "So," says Gardner, "if we would be the children of the author of nature, we are urged

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<sup>18</sup> "This Believing World," pp. 270, 58. Macmillan.

never to despair, however dark the clouds may be, but to keep doing, always aiming at what is better, and when we fail beginning again. Such constant striving, however it may seem in this or that case to be frustrated, must in the long run tend to produce a better earth, and a nearer approach to heaven, just as the creative spirit, always working in the world, has by degrees produced plants and animals of a higher grade and of greater beauty."<sup>19</sup>

We must turn the power upon ourselves that we may overcome our own weaknesses and upon the world that it may be transformed into a kingdom of righteousness. Religion is no doubt more restful and enjoyable when it is reserved for use in the church. The engine of a sawmill purrs along like a Cadillac, when the belt is on the loose pulley; but when the saw is turned against the log the engine hesitates and groans, and when a tough knot is struck the whole forest resounds with complaint. But then timber is being converted into lumber—work is being done. We may enjoy the peace of heaven when we are dwelling apart, and we may have the comparative peace of earth if we are willing to become of the earth earthy. But there is conflict when we undertake to actualize the vision of the mountain top in the real world. And yet this is what religion must do. Better an ounce of spiritual power applied to the world of need than a whole ton going to waste in speculation, visions, ecstasies, and thrills.

What, then, can we do through the power of re-

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<sup>19</sup> "The Practical Basis of Christian Belief," p. 80. By Percy Gardner. Scribner's.

ligion? What may we expect God to do? Unquestionably we may expect him to cleanse the heart, strengthen our motives, increase our faith, confirm our hope, and perfect us in love. We may look to him for courage in the face of danger, strength in time of trial, and peace in the midst of the world's confusion. We may expect to receive the Holy Spirit in answer to prayer. The experience of divine help in personal religion is so obviously a matter of fact that it may be stated as a law, which is put by Macintosh in this form:

On condition of the right religious adjustment with reference to desired truly moral states of the will (such as repentance, moral aspiration, and the moral elements in self-control, courage, victory over temptation, faithful service and patient endurance), God the Holy Spirit produces the specific moral results desired.<sup>20</sup>

The same writer states the law of peace as follows:

The theological law of the experience of Christian peace may be formulated thus: On condition of (1) the reconciliation or atonement with God which is involved in a truly Christian faith, and (2) a steady contemplation of the fact that one is at peace with God, there is produced within the individual by God the Holy Spirit, within such limits as may be set by constitutional and other conditions, a feeling of peace.<sup>21</sup>

These experiences are of daily occurrence. Millions of people live from day to day in the consciousness of a strength which comes from above. "Happy are those who from childhood," writes Streeter, "have been habituated to cast their burden upon the Lord, to give free, frank, and natural expression in

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<sup>20</sup> "Theology as an Empirical Science," p. 148. Macmillan.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

confident and spontaneous prayer to contrition, sorrow, fear, on each occasion, great or small, as it arises, realizing God as the unseen friend—ready to forgive sins, able and anxious to bind up wounds, a tower of defense in danger. Such find their prayer is answered by a courage enhanced and an insight sharpened, which enable them to look trouble and failure in the face, and, before the bitterness has time to sink into the soul, to effect for themselves whatever ‘reassociation’ is required.”<sup>22</sup>

We may also expect God to go before us in the power of the Spirit and prepare the way for the coming of his kingdom, whenever we put forth an honest endeavor to give his righteousness effect in any phase of the world’s life. We may expect him to accompany his word of truth and carry it home to minds and hearts with convincing power.

But religion also enables us to do works of faith. Jesus did something for the dumb boy that the unaided skill of the physician could not have done. “Why could not we cast him out?” “This kind goeth not out but by prayer.” Religion makes for health and sanity. While the skill of physician and surgeon is indispensable, religion will do more to cure nervousness, banish fear, keep the mind in normal action, and prevent bodily derangement than any other power. Macintosh gives this as a law: “On condition of an adequate cultivation of the right religious adjustment and its normal consequences in will and feeling and thought, the indwelling divine Life, or Holy Spirit, tends to bring even the life of the body into a more normal and healthful

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<sup>22</sup> “Reality,” p. 258. By B. H. Streeter. Macmillan.

condition and, where certain physiological conditions are fulfilled, even to cure certain species of bodily ills."<sup>23</sup> Undoubtedly more human disorders are traceable to moral and spiritual perversion than to any other cause, and peace with God and man has a strong tendency to restore a person to normal mental and bodily health. The work of the physician must be supplemented by faith. Streeter cites high authority in support of this view:

Normally, religion is a force which makes for sanity and happiness, as well as for morality, in the life both of the individual and of the community. In this connection I may quote a remark made to me by a continental psychologist of world-fame to the effect that "as a result of his therapeutic practice he had come to the conclusion that for complete psychological health mankind requires either a religion or some substitute for religion which has not yet been discovered." And he obviously regretted that he himself did not intellectually see his way clear to either alternative. I may also refer to an illuminating suggestion worked out by my friend Dr. J. A. Hadfield. That "urge to completeness," he argues, which on the physical side of the organism expresses itself in growth, in the healing of wounds and even (in the lower types of organism) in the renewal of lost limbs, has a psychological counterpart. The "completeness" toward which the psychological urge is reaching includes absence of conflict within the self and a felt harmony of the individual both with his social environment and with the universe at large.<sup>24</sup>

The two extremes to be avoided are, first, the view that the human body is a mere machine which may be mended by the purely chemical action of medicines, and second, that the immediate correction

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<sup>23</sup> "Theology as an Empirical Science," p. 154. Macmillan.

<sup>24</sup> "Reality," p. 280. Macmillan.

of all bodily diseases may be had for the asking. Two things may be said in regard to the power of faith in healing diseases: first, there was not as much of it in Bible times as some people think; and second, there might be a great deal more of it now than most people expect. In the early centuries of Christianity exorcism was the approved method of driving out demons and curing diseases, and the process was carried through by means of a magical formula. A great use was unconsciously made of suggestion. Many people thought they were possessed of demons, and many were restored to a normal condition through the repetition of a set of mysterious words. This was the only method generally known at the time, and a great deal of good was accomplished through it. But that was in a prescientific age, and as science developed these methods fell into disuse. It was as Mark Twain's "Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court" remarked, in the chapter on "The Boss Against the Knights": "Somehow, every time the magic of fol-de-rol tried conclusions with the magic of science, the magic of fol-de-rol got left."

Forsyth remarks that "the question of miracles is a thorny one." There is not any theoretical objection to them that can be sustained. It cannot be claimed that miracles are impossible, for God can certainly do anything not inconsistent with his moral and spiritual perfection. It is a question of fact and of sufficient evidence to establish the fact. The scientific questioning of miracles did not arise from a dislike for an occasional activity on the part of God which might upset the theory that the universe

was a mechanism compelled to follow a predetermined course. Those scientists who claim that everything occurs according to law keep on acting themselves and urging others to act. There is no objection to the exercise of original choice, either human or divine. In his book on "Conservatism, Radicalism, and Scientific Method," Dr. Wolfe takes it for granted that human action follows psychological law as invariably as the planets move according to the law of gravitation, and yet the whole volume is a plea for the acceptance of the scientific method in human conduct in place of blind conservatism or rash and rabid radicalism. The scientist does not desire to banish God from his world or to reduce the whole of existence to a mechanism. There is serious question with some minds whether the universe is intelligent and purposeful, and most scientists would welcome miraculous acts to resolve the doubt. In fact, nearly all men would like to have their belief in God supported by overt acts which would convince them that the universe has a personal will. We sometimes feel that *moral* and *spiritual* evidence does not suffice. We would like to walk by sight.

If it cannot be said that miracles are impossible, no more can it be said that they did not happen. It is impossible to disprove a miracle. If some of the phenomena of the Wesleyan revival were not so widely recorded that it is impossible to deny them, the staid worshiper in a conventional congregation of the present day might wonder whether religion could ever produce such marvelous and unusual effects.

In the question of miracles, it is the *fact* of experience that makes the difficulty. We are face to face



with the practical question, What can we do? How can we go about lifting the heavy load of sickness and poverty which rests upon humanity's shoulders? Why should we toil arduously to bring relief, if God might at any moment magically remove the whole burden with a touch of his little finger? If there was once a time when such power was available, why is it not available now? These are the practical questions which arise in the study of miracle. Some men have reached the conclusion that God is now, and has always been, doing his divine best for the good of the whole race of mankind. Macintosh states the difficulty as follows:

And not on grounds of scientific procedure alone, or chiefly, do we object to this idea of arbitrary, exceptional, unmediated and therefore unpredictable "miracles"; our chief objection is practical and religious. We shall find that the problem of evil is exceedingly difficult to solve, or indeed impossible of solution, if we admit the even occasional occurrence of miracles of this sort. What, indeed, should we have to think of God, if we had to believe that he once miraculously changed water into wine to satisfy the thirst of a few merry-makers, but has persistently refused to work any miracle to prevent even such unexampled atrocities as have recently occurred to hundreds of thousands of innocent and helpless victims of the systematic attempt to exterminate a race through deportation to the desert and through ruthless massacre? Is it too much to say that, in view of recent events, any such miracle as that of Cana<sup>1</sup> is *religiously* incredible?<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Whatever the final critical and theological opinion concerning the historicity of this incident may be, nothing can ever rob it of its rich symbolic meaning. Jesus went with his disciples as an invited guest to a wedding, mingled sympathetically with the company, and made his contribution to the joy of the occasion. God is not an ascetic. He attends every marriage to which he is invited, provides the viands for the wedding feast, participates in the joy of the relatives and friends of bride and bridegroom, and cements the union of two loving hearts with his blessing.

<sup>25</sup> "Theology as an Empirical Science," p. 203. Macmillan,

However, this noted scholar does not question the miraculous action of God in ancient or in modern times. He only contends, with Bushnell, that such miracles as God may be expected to perform may occur in any age or place:

Experimental religion at its best not only demands, but is assured, of miracle enough (in this sense) for adequate revelation of the living God. There is miracle enough for an answer to true prayer, in the sense of a dependable response to the right religious adjustment; miracle enough for special providence, in the sense of spiritual provision; miracle enough for salvation, the regeneration of the individual, his reconciliation with God, his progressive sanctification through the indwelling Holy Spirit; and there can be miracle enough, ultimately, for the regeneration of society and the establishment of the kingdom of God. Doubtless we should recognize that to some extent miracles in this sense of the term take place outside the bounds of our own religion; but the chief miracle up to the present is the miracle of the spiritual personality of Jesus Christ, the miracle of what God did in and through him and ultimately for the world, in response to the right religious adjustment on the part of this "well-beloved Son."<sup>26</sup>

The change in the attitude of many theologians toward miracles has been brought about through the prevalence of the scientific method. In earlier times men looked for miraculous acts; they welcomed them, gloried in them, and attached great value to them as evidence of the presence, action, and providence of God. People wanted to believe accounts of the strange and marvelous, and because the wish was on the side of such events it was easy to regard them as credible. Scientific evidence was neither demanded nor desired. If the story of the

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<sup>26</sup> "Theology as an Empirical Science," p. 204. Macmillan,

angels at the battle of Mons had arisen in connection with a war of the Middle Ages or the conquest of Canaan it would no doubt have taken its place in history along with Constantine's "*In hoc signo vinces.*" But a scientific age traced the story to its source in the imagination of an English writer. The difficulty encountered in establishing the miracles as facts of history lies in the fact that they occurred before the world began to study history scientifically and to distinguish sharply between history and story. But we live now in another atmosphere, created by long and careful observation of the action of nature as under law, and we see God as clearly in making the sun to rise as the ancient Israelite saw him in causing it to stand still. It has therefore come about that most people do not rely any longer upon miracle as proof of the certainty of God and his presence in the world. However, there are many who yet derive great benefit from the miraculous events recorded in the Bible. Bishop Gore acknowledges that his faith is greatly helped by the miraculous control of Jesus over nature. In a footnote in his latest book, he says:

Faith in most of us is very weak at times, specially when the awful vastness of nature oppresses one and the spectacle of its seeming indifference to all moral aims or distinctions. I speak as one of those who feel the doctrine that God is love, the only intellectually difficult doctrine of Christianity; and I find therefore the well-attested nature-miracles of the New Testament not difficulties, but intellectual supports, because they show me the control of nature certainly subservient to moral purpose, and they contradict the pressing insistence of dualism—such a dualism between physical nature and morality as Huxley yielded to. As the Christian religion could not have *begun* without miracles or the belief

in miracles, so I think that to-day we are rationally led to believe that they actually occurred, and that without such belief the conviction of the Christian faith would not hold its ground.<sup>27</sup>

And yet Jesus did not wish to be known as a wonder-worker. In the Synoptic Gospels he is described as performing miracles out of pure compassion and refusing to give signs. He did not appeal to them as evidence of his Messiahship, except in so far as they showed him to be guided by the Spirit of God. Moreover, if miracles were needed then, it would seem that they are needed now. If Christianity made its way in the Roman Empire by working wonders, it might just as profitably astonish Chinese, Japanese, East Indians, and hard-headed business men, statesmen, and scientists into accepting its doctrines. But Buddhism and Mohammedanism made their way without them, and certainly Christianity has more truth and spiritual power and is more native to man's spiritual being than either of these. However, Jesus certainly performed works in keeping with his character and calling—works which were regarded as miraculous by those who witnessed them. But these acts need not be thought of as above law. They may rather be considered as the normal expression of his character and mission. Stanley Jones relates a conversation which bears upon this subject:

I once asked Professor Dreisch, the great German philosopher and exponent of "Vitalism," this question: "Whenever you get a higher type of life do you not expect that around that life there will be a higher type of manifestation?" He

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<sup>27</sup> "Can We Then Believe?" p. 53. By Charles Gore. Scribner's.

assented to this, and I asked him further: "If Jesus represents a higher type of being, would you not have to make room in your thinking that around that life would be a higher type of doing which to us on a lower plane might be considered miracle?" He replied: "Yes, if Jesus represents a higher type of being, I would have to make room in my thinking that around that life would be the possibility of what might seem to us on a lower plane miracle. But it would have to be examined scientifically." Precisely!<sup>28</sup>

Jesus did not claim omniscience, nor did he exercise the unlimited power of omnipotence. The evangelists declare that some of his works were conditioned upon faith. The teachings of Jesus are so interwoven with miraculous acts that it is impossible to retain one without the other. But there are various kinds of miracles, and it is not always clear whether a miracle actually occurred or was grafted on a parable. Percy Gardner says that in our day almost all theologians allow that all records of miracles need not be accepted as literal history, but must be divided into classes. He declares that the fact that Jesus exercised remarkable powers of healing is allowed by all, and that the few miracles of another class would be dwelt upon by few authorities as evidence for the supernatural nature of the Founder of Christianity. He adds:

Such a view of the human life of the Saviour as is here implied is very usual among Christians at present. It was greatly furthered by the appearance in the last generation of "*Ecce Homo!*" a work of undoubted genius, which on its first appearance was regarded by extreme evangelicals as "vomited out of the mouth of hell," but is now cited with appreciation

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<sup>28</sup>From "The Christ of the Indian Road," p. 159. By E. Stanley Jones. Copyright 1925. Used by permission of the Abingdon Press.

in many pulpits. Recently we have had a work of similar character, Dr. Glover's "Jesus of History," which has not only been accepted as a textbook by the Christian Student Movement, but has been commended to the Church in a Preface by the Archbishop of Canterbury. What further need have we of witnesses? <sup>29</sup>

Undoubtedly there are limitations in the use of divine power at the present time. If we were simply to read the Bible and Church history, we might expect to remove any obstacle, cure any disease, and heal any wound by faith. But experience has proved to the contrary. The earnest young preacher who endeavors to give the New Testament a literal application in his pastoral work by depending upon faith for healing all manner of diseases does not cease his efforts and change his views for lack of faith. He learns by experience that there are other important factors to be taken into consideration. The Church has learned the same lesson, and when an ignorant brother attempts to return to what he thinks was apostolic practice by anointing with oil and the laying on of hands to restore afflicted people to health, it knows that such methods have been tried over and over again, only to be abandoned because results do not justify the faith that has been put in them. In a community which had been seized with a spasm of "faith healing," a preacher was explaining from the pulpit that there were limitations to what could be done for the body by faith, when he was interrupted by a brother who demanded an illustration. "Well," said the preacher, "I do not think it would restore an amputated leg."

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<sup>29</sup> "The Practical Basis of Christian Belief," p. 162. Scribner's.

When the preacher later asked for an explanation of the ripple of amusement which passed over the congregation at his reply, he was told that the man who interrupted him with the question had a cork leg.

There seems to be a realm which is fixed. There is a field in which man has the power to bring changes, and there is also a region in which God acts in a way analogous to that of man, but there is a rigid region in which law is observed by both God and man. Scientists have undertaken to enter this fixed field and discover its laws. Wieman explains their aim in this way:

Let us be very clear that materialism and mechanism, as well as spirit and purpose, are postulates or assumptions made in the interest of certain great aspirations of the human mind, the aspiration, namely, to predict, control, and clearly define everything in the universe. We can never do justice to materialism and mechanism until we see that it is the expression of a great hope and a great effort, just as truly as the spiritual and teleological interpretations of the world. The materialistic and the spiritualistic demands both represent at the high intellectual and spiritual level the two contrasting ways in which human life labors to uplift and magnify itself. One is just as brave and adventurous as the other. Both are ventures of faith. Great gain and loss is at stake on both sides. Under the banner of mechanism and materialism men have gone forth in the high faith that they could predict and control the changes of nature and could formulate those imaginative, intellectual experiments by which science thinks its way throughout the universe. This has been a great enterprise, and it would be sad indeed if men were forced to give it up and pronounce the faith unfounded. But just as heroic is the enterprise on the other side, and just as much is at stake. Under the banner of spirit and purpose men have gone forth seeking in the universe that which is beautiful, that which can be loved, and that which can be worshiped. Is beauty merely

something that we attribute to nature, or is it resident there just as truly as the molecules or any sense object? And is there in the universe, as basic and far-reaching as the elements of matter or energy, that which can be loved and adored?<sup>30</sup>

However, the fact that a realm is fixed does not rule God out of it. It is fixed by God himself, because there is need of such a realm in carrying out his eternal purpose. Brightman holds that mechanical laws are the expression of purpose: "Machines made by man embody purpose. Man's purpose may use the mechanisms of nature by subduing her to human ends. It is at least possible that the whole system of mechanical laws may serve the divine purpose as the system of laws in a watch serves human purpose. This view is what is commonly called the immanence of God in nature. It means that all the laws of science are more or less adequate accounts of the modes of divine procedure."<sup>31</sup> In a world of calamity, cruelty, and injustice, such as ours, the problems raised by the theory of occasional interference are great. Macintosh touches upon them with this word:

Moreover, the assertion of such intervention in external nature would raise serious problems. In the first place, is there any evidence, tested with adequately critical care and found convincing, upon which such intervention can be based as in any one instance an established fact? In the second place, if intervention is the method depended upon for the providential control of nature, why is it not resorted to more frequently, so as to prevent those appalling calamities, phys-

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<sup>30</sup> "Religious Experience and Scientific Method," p. 121. Macmillan.

<sup>31</sup> "Introduction to Philosophy," p. 310. By E. S. Brightman. Henry Holt and Company.



ical and social, individual and racial, with which we are so familiar? In the third place, if it were resorted to at all frequently, would it not interfere with man's ever learning how to adjust himself to, and how to make use of, his natural environment?<sup>32</sup>

This fixedness, however great the hardship it may work at times, is a good and not an evil. Knowledge would be impossible without law. Man could not profit by experience if he could not anticipate the future through what he has learned of the past and present. Streeter presents this phase of the subject with great clearness:

"We cry out against the "inexorability" of the laws of nature and man's hard fate in that regard. In this there is a latent fallacy. The uniformity of nature is not the inexorability of a tyrant callous to his victim's groans; it is more like the immovability of the touch-line, without which there would be no game, though it would at times be vastly convenient to an individual player if by a miracle the line would approach or retire a yard or two. The uniformity of nature is not an iron cage against which we dash ourselves in longing to escape; it is a necessary condition of such freedom as we have. Theoretically, the problem how I am to reconcile the reign of law with freedom may be insoluble. Practically, unless I knew that I could reckon on things happening in accordance with some fixed and ascertainable principle, I might wish, but I could never act or plan. If fire sometimes heated, sometimes froze, the kettle, who could invite a friend to tea? If the laws of specific gravity changed from day to day, who would venture in balloon or ship? Science is always discovering some new law; but this, so far from being the discovery of a fresh limit to man's liberty, puts new power into his hands."<sup>33</sup>

Brightman also indicates the practical benefits

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<sup>32</sup> "Theology as an Empirical Science," p. 196. Macmillan.

<sup>33</sup> "Reality," p. 224. Macmillan.

that follow in the wake of a discovery of unvarying laws:

From the possibility of making predictions arises the fact that mechanical explanation enables man to control his experience. Knowledge of the mechanism of pumps brings drinking water to the faucet in every home; knowledge of the mechanics of gases and electricity lights our houses and our streets, alleviates suffering, or kills the enemy in war. Insight into mechanical law makes it possible for men to sail under the water or to fly in the air. Knowledge of psychological mechanisms has been of great aid to the physician, the educator, and the social worker.<sup>34</sup>

Moreover, the same writer declares that the discovery of mechanism ministers to freedom:

The spirit of mechanistic explanation is friendly to free and untrammelled investigation. Where mechanism is held as a dogma necessary to scientific salvation, this spirit, so to speak, is bound. Ordinarily, however, the scientist seeks to be instructed by experience; he has his eye on the facts. No prejudice and no authority can lead him away from them. The mechanical explanation of astronomical and physical facts has been one of the greatest forces for freedom in history. It has banished superstition and brought enlightenment to the race. Here, then, is a paradox; mechanism in the service of freedom.<sup>35</sup>

In the ancient world it was commonly believed that nature was ruled by capricious deities, and even among the Jews the hand of God was recognized more in the extraordinary and unusual than in the ordinary and usual. But Jesus taught the impartial-

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<sup>34</sup> "Introduction to Philosophy," p. 258. Henry Holt and Company.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 259. Henry Holt & Company.

ity of nature, and modern science holds the same view. As Gardner says:

The Jews, as was natural at the time, thought that the interventions of God took the form of suspensions or violations of law in the material world. They thought that God would smooth the waves for a ship which carried a great mission. They thought that if they repented at a time of famine God would at once send rain. And many people to this day remain in the pre-scientific frame of mind. But Christians ought to remember that it is expressly condemned by the Saviour. "God maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." We have here an express denial of the ordinary Jewish belief. God does not directly punish sin by withholding rain. And yet since moral law underlies mere physical law, it remains in a real sense true that "a fruitful land maketh he barren, for the iniquity of them that dwell therein."<sup>36</sup>

In all primitive religions crops were planted with religious ceremonies which were supposed to help the ground to yield a more abundant harvest. In Roman Catholic countries it was long customary for the priest to go out in springtime and bless the fields. But science has rendered such customs obsolete. The weather is now considered an integral part of the solar system. A pious merchant would not dare to send an unseaworthy boat on a long voyage and trust God to bring it safe to port in answer to prayer. We do not now expect to bring rain by magic or prayer any more than we expect to control the other factors which enter into the production of a crop in that way. Nature yields her rewards to all who understand and comply with her laws regardless of their piety. Goodness also has

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<sup>36</sup> "The Practical Basis of Christian Belief," p. 141. Scribner's.

its reward, but a good man is not necessarily a good farmer. We must learn to understand God's way and not try to warp him to our own. Gardner says, again:

The conception of God which dominates the great majority of people is still at the pre-scientific and arbitrary stage. They think that if there be a God he must needs interfere in the orderly course of affairs in the interests of morality, or what they choose to regard as morality. And when great calamities or catastrophes happen, and the heavens remain silent, they dethrone God in their hearts. They say, in the current phrase, that they have no use for such a Deity. A far more serious question is whether God has any use for them. Instead of trying to find out what the ways of God really are, they make up their minds what they ought to be, and when experience explodes their facile optimism they abandon religion altogether.<sup>37</sup>

It is clear from observation that it takes some rough usage to make people. But we sometimes get more than we would choose, and we like to think that "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb." But he does not. Painful and terrible things sometimes happen, and we wonder why God does not intervene. He is not absent or indifferent, though his goodness cannot always be recognized in the event, and we may be sure that whatever is a grief to us is also a grief to God, who bears it for the sake of the total good and helps us to bear it in the same way. There is a special providence which is universal, and there is also a special providence which avails for those who respond to the divine love. But this second special providence is over some and not over others, not because God ceases to be impartial in

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<sup>37</sup> "The Practical Basis of Christian Belief," p. 139. Scribner's.

his care, but because some put themselves within range of his goodness while others do not. Macintosh points out the special consideration which the Christian may expect:

The fact is, we seem to know *no* special providence other than the provision of special grace adequate to our special circumstances and our special spiritual need. We have simply got to learn to be Christian enough to be primarily interested in "sufficient grace" to enable us to do the will of God and at the same time to be, in the best sense of the term, stoical enough to recognize with satisfaction that this "sufficient grace" is all we need ever look for in the way of special providence. But while this is all we can ever get, it is what we can always get, if we are willing to fulfill the religious conditions. What is always available as the direct and immediate answer to the right sort of prayer is nothing less than God himself, the Holy Spirit, and all that is involved in having God.<sup>38</sup>

What the modern world needs and must have is the power which religion alone can give, and the scientific application of that power. Religion in itself is not enough; the power which it generates must be distributed, directed, and applied. The race has made self-destruction possible through scientific discovery. It has developed far more facility for material effect than moral discernment to give it proper direction. Western civilization has become pitilessly critical of all institutions, and the sacred mantle that shielded the state, and the home, and other institutions from examination and attack has been removed. The general public is rapidly arriving at disillusionment. People are hungering for religion, but they are no longer frightened by the charms and bugaboos of a more credulous age. They

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<sup>38</sup> "Theology as an Empirical Science," p. 175. Macmillan.

demand a type of religion which gives genuine communion with God and affects the life of the world for good. For leaders of religion merely to be good will not suffice; they must know both God and the world in which they live and be able to give intelligent direction to the divine power which religion supplies. Dean Tillett thus expresses the truth that piety must be supplemented by acquired knowledge:

Is it a mere accident that the two most creative, constructive, and influential characters, respectively, in Old and New Testament history are, intellectually, the best educated and most thoroughly equipped men of which we have any account in the sacred writings? God's providence often makes use of ignorant and unlearned men and accomplishes a great work through humble and weak instrumentalities; but he also uses those who are possessed of strong intellects and much learning, and it is through these last that the greatest work is accomplished. Christ called a group of unlearned and ignorant fishermen of Galilee into his service and trained them in his own personal peripatetic school; and they are reported to have "turned the world upside down" in the Galilean villages where they preached. But he also called to his service one educated disciple of Gamaliel, and this one man, when soundly converted and baptized with the Holy Ghost, went forth and, by God's gracious blessing on his learning and zeal, did more to spread the gospel of Christ throughout the world than all the unlettered fishermen put together, so far as the New Testament records the results of their labors. If God has no need of human learning, he has much less need of human ignorance.<sup>39</sup>

When people are engaged in the act of sincere Christian worship, they recognize the truth of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

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<sup>39</sup> "Providence, Prayer, and Power," p. 310. Cokesbury Press.

When they gather at the communion table they are at peace with God and one another and desire to be at peace with all the world. But they cannot remain at worship; they must go out into the world of business, commerce, and industry—of prejudice, competition, and national and racial antipathy, and apply the great truths realized in worship to *all* the relations of life. It will therefore be necessary to acquire a knowledge of conditions through careful observation in order that the power of religion may be properly applied. Religion alone can provide the good will which is necessary to bring in the age of industrial peace. But more than good will is required. There must be a knowledge of labor conditions, of markets, of production costs, of the value of labor, and of all the other factors which enter into the production and distribution of wealth—a knowledge which cannot be obtained except through scientific investigation. Religion alone will not solve the problem of capital and labor; science alone cannot do it; but *religion* and *science*, working hand in hand, can. Seebohm Rowntree, an English manufacturer who has given much thought and practical endeavor to a solution of the industrial problem, writes:

Thirty years of fairly close study of social, economic, and industrial questions from the practical standpoint have driven me to the conclusion that there is no way out of our present difficulties if we leave the spiritual factor out of account. The real difficulty is not to devise a desirable scheme of society, but to persuade men to conform to it when it has been devised, and this is less a mental than a moral and spiritual problem. What the world needs to-day is a great spiritual revival, whose immediate object is not the saving of souls in some future life, but the establishment here and now of a

standard of life more creditable to human hearts and heads than that which obtains to-day. . . .

I think the first thing is to make it clear that what we are seeking after is not a dreamy, ineffective otherworldliness, but a spiritual dynamic which will make this world an infinitely better place to live in. At present, the kind of employer who asserts with confidence that "business is business" and the politician whose actions are based on a materialistic philosophy look upon themselves as hard-headed, practical men, and secretly despise the spiritual teacher. This is largely because the religious teachers of to-day have been too much on the defensive—too apologetic. They must tell the "hard-headed" man of the world, whether he be an employer or a diplomat, that really he isn't hard-headed at all, but very soft-headed; that it is his heart that is hard, not his head. They should ask him whether he is proud of society as he sees it to-day. We should make men feel that just in so far as social and industrial and international policies are based on selfishness and materialism they will be failures and *stupid* failures. Look at wars between educated and presumably civilized people. Are they not stupid? Look at strikes and lockouts. Are they not stupid? Ought we not to burn with shame when we realize that we have actually failed to discover a better way of settling many of our differences than that of jackals and hyenas? <sup>40</sup>

Religion presents the ideal of human brotherhood. It sees a brotherhood of nations as well as of individuals and generates a feeling of international good will. At Christmas time the whole civilized world gathers around the cradle of the Christ child and listens to the angels sing of peace on earth and good will to men. Then people are at worship. And there is enough good will generated by worship to keep the whole world at peace continually. The power for it is there. The disposition is there. But men

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<sup>40</sup> "Religious Foundations," pp. 66, 67. Edited by Rufus M. Jones. Macmillan.



have gone on fighting for thousands of years after the prophet saw in vision a warless world, and they will go on fighting to the end of time, unless the power of religion is scientifically applied through a knowledge of racial characteristics, trade relations, and national aspiration. Science must discover the causes that lead to war and devise means for the peaceful settlement of quarrels. The solution of the dark problem of war, as of every other problem, lies in the scientific application of the power generated in religious worship.

**VI**  
**FINALITY IN RELIGION**



## VI

### FINALITY IN RELIGION

THIS age is interrogating reality afresh, and everything is being brought up for reëxamination. The questioning does not exempt even those precious truths which have hitherto been classed as "eternal verities." All beliefs, philosophies, customs, and institutions are haled into the court of free inquiry and asked to show cause why they should not be relegated to the trash-heap of outworn and discarded rubbish in the onward movement of the race.

In a world of progress, is there anything final? If so, what, and in what sense? Is there anything that may be expected to survive in the midst of universal change? Will religion abide? Was Positivism right in holding that philosophy superseded religion only to be ousted in turn by a science which depends solely upon facts which the five senses may discover? If religion is to endure, will it be represented by any one of the great religions of the past, or will it take a form different from any of them? The world's parliament of religions made clear the fact that the great faiths of mankind had each developed in an environment which left its impress upon creeds and customs, worship and conduct. Are all religions relative to time and place, each having its natural birth, growth, and decay? Are all equally good and equally transient? Was Buddhism adapted to the East, just as Christianity was to the West, and will they both finally yield to a

religion which will better meet the needs of a unified world? Has each been relatively true, in that it has been the best religion for its adherents? Is no religion absolutely true and final?

Now, the most striking feature about the New Testament is its note of finality. The apostles were certain that they had at last found something universal, perennially creative, and good for all time. They were sure that in the long quest for peace and soul satisfaction they had arrived. They stood at the end of a process of revelation which had been going on for thousands of years. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." For the apostles, Jesus was final. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

We may anticipate by saying that it is so now. After nineteen hundred years, the world is looking to Jesus as the author and finisher of faith. In this day of change and progress and enlightenment, men are not moving away from him, or beyond him, but to him and in him. In all the intervening centuries there has never been any serious religious movement in the Christian world aiming to transcend Jesus Christ. "That surpassingly beautiful text which we call the 'Good News,'" says De Launay, "has been for two thousand years continually impregnated with the living essence, the sap, of the *élite* of humanity. If we experience a desire for religion, where shall we find a better one?" Again, this gifted French author writes: "It would be painful to us and without advantage to worship the fetish of the negro, to dance the scalp dance before the

totem pole of the redskin, to implore Poseidon to calm the sea or Zeus to spare us his thunder. Among the religions actually practiced on the surface of the globe or past religions of which history tells us, Christianity alone brings the solution that we ask for. A European is not ordinarily converted to Mohammedanism or to Buddhism. For him the act of faith, if religious and exact, will bring him indeed only to the religion of Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup> Alongside these words of a devout Roman Catholic we may place this utterance of a progressive and scholarly Protestant:

Look at the facts and say how and where the march of progress has left Christ behind. Have men since found an answer more true or more inspiring to the questions which every man or woman who thinks and feels is compelled to face? Not yet has science or philosophy solved the riddle of existence; not yet have sorrow and wrong, disease and disillusionment departed from the earth. Death has not lost his sting, the grave its victory. Till that time comes, or till some nobler, truer vision has been seen, it is time wasted to interrogate the nature of the universe without first deeply pondering how far, or in what way, that ancient answer to the riddle may assist our quest.<sup>2</sup>

The modern world has been shocked out of its self-confidence and self-complacency by the unspeakable horrors of the Great War, and, overwhelmed by many apparently insoluble practical problems, it is turning to religion for help. Statesmen, financiers, and sociologists, these realists who are dealing with the actual world of affairs, are looking to religion

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<sup>1</sup>"A Modern Plea for Christianity," pp. 60, 57. By Louis De Launay. Macmillan.

<sup>2</sup>"Reality," p. 69. By B. H. Streeter. Macmillan.

alone to create a new type of character without which human life would rapidly become intolerable. The leaders of the race are now freely admitting that problems of industry, government, and international relations cannot be solved without religion. The whole world is turning to religion as its only hope. And it is *Christian* religion to which the appeal is being made. China no longer looks to Confucius for salvation, nor India to Buddha; in so far as these great nations are being stirred with spiritual aspiration, they are looking to Jesus Christ. The Occident is not transcending Jesus, and the Orient is coming to him. History is confirming the conviction of the early Church that Christianity is the final religion. The voice of the twentieth century unites with the chorus of the first in proclaiming Jesus King of kings and Lord of lords.

But the modern world has a conception of reality which is different from that of antiquity, and, consequently, a different view of finality. In the old view, the universe was regarded as static, while in the modern view it is dynamic. The Jew, the Greek, and the Roman pictured a universe which remained essentially the same throughout the eternal ages. To their minds, the changing was illusory, while the fixed was eternally real. To modern thought, the whole living universe is moving, doing, growing, without end. The contrast between the two conceptions is thus drawn by Dr. Foster:

For the old view, reality was static substance; for the new, dynamic consciousness. For the old, the primacy was in the intellect; for the new, in the will. For the old, the mind was passive in knowing; for the new, active. For the old, man came into possession of his chief good by the contemplative

vision of God; for the new, by the energetic service of man. For the old, man was saved by imperturbableness and peace; for the new, by trouble and struggle and sorrow. For the old, man was saved by belief; for the new, by doubt—and it is just possible that there is more *faith* in the new doubt than in the old belief. Once, in this matter of salvation, knowledge preceded conduct; now conduct precedes knowledge. Once being was before becoming; now becoming is before being. It is a great change. Once the great matter was the conformity of conduct to a model under the eye of authority; now it is the development of character under the responsibility of freedom.<sup>3</sup>

In the thought of the ancient world, a complete contrast was drawn between time and eternity, and things eternal were viewed as superlatively valuable, while things temporal were considered vain and ephemeral. Time, with its changes, was almost too brief to count—a fleeting day thrust in between the measureless and motionless divisions of preceding and subsequent eternity. God, who dwelt in eternal calm, for some reason which could only be dimly guessed, had created time, with its vanity and confusion; but soon time would cease and the nightmare would be over. The great *terminus ad quem* was the Judgment Day, after which the whole universe would settle back into eternity, and the souls that had survived the engulfing “waves of this troublesome world” would be received into the real world above. Men dwelt in a little universe, composed of a stable heaven and a transient earth, with gradations from the gross material prison house below to the seventh heaven of spiritual delight, where God had his eternal throne and all the holy angels their home. Plato

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<sup>3</sup>“The Finality of the Christian Religion,” p. 192. By G. B. Foster. University of Chicago Press.



thought of matter as essentially evil and illusive and of spirit as incorruptible and real. The world in which men lived was composed of fleeting forms that imperfectly imaged forth the ideas which were eternal in the heavens. With such views, finality did not present a problem. It seemed quite possible to gain a knowledge of the essential facts and infer from them the nature of the universe as a final system. Certainly there could be no difficulty in the way of revealing a static heaven, provided such a heaven really existed.

But astronomy has vastly extended the universe, and, so far as we know, the only limit upon it lies in the capacity to invent telescopes which will pierce farther into the heavens. And the bodies in all the stellar spaces are essentially like our earth. There is no gradation from the gross, through the less gross, to the fine spiritual composition of the remotest heavenly bodies, and this aspect of the contrast between earth and heaven is gone. The earth is as fixed and durable as the stars. The contrast between the location of earth and of heaven has also ceased to have any meaning. We can no longer think of heaven as "above" and hell as "below," with the earth in between. "Up" and "down" are purely relative terms, for what is up at any given time will be down twelve hours later. There is no absolute plane of reference in sight, and so far as we know the four corners of the heavens have yielded to a limitless relativity.

Motion in space is also relative. If a stone is dropped into a lake from a bridge fourteen feet above the surface, in a second of time it will move in a straight line through the fourteen feet, and if there

were no other motion to be considered, this motion from bridge to water would be along an absolutely straight line. But while the stone is moving to the water it is also being carried by the earth's rotation in a horizontal direction at the rate of a thousand miles an hour, so that it travels nearly fifteen hundred feet in one direction while it is moving fourteen feet in another. And there is still another known motion that must be considered. The stone is being carried by the earth along its orbit around the sun, and it covers seventeen miles on this course while it is passing through the fourteen feet between the bridge and the water. What other motions may have to be taken into consideration finally we do not know, but these three make it quite clear that all known motion is relative. Einstein is reputed to have said that there are not more than a dozen men who understand his theory of relativity, and the writer is quite certain that he is not one of the dozen; but this illustration is sufficient to indicate the great changes that have taken place in man's view of his world.

Geology and biology have extended time, as astronomy has extended space. The duration of the earth can no longer be thought of as reaching over only a few thousand years. The stratifications revealed by geology, and the modifications in the structure of living organisms presented by zoölogy and biology, indicate changes requiring long periods of time, and the beginning of the world as a separate planet has thus been thrust back indefinitely into the far distant past. Time is long. Chemistry and physics have also removed the old contrast between matter and spirit, for whatever matter may be, it

is certainly not the solid material that physicists once supposed it to be. There is reason for thinking that the universe is essentially monistic, and that what we call matter is a manifestation of intelligent spirit. So far as we know, reality is eternally creative. The time-world may also be the eternal world. In any case, it is no longer possible to think of time as an insignificant interlude thrust into the eternal harmony. There is a hint of truth in Bergson's view that duration is the very stuff out of which creation is made. The universe not only exists; it also endures.

The Hegelian philosophy broke the hold of the idea of a static world. In the view of its originator, the whole of history is a process moving steadily and certainly on, determined by a regular succession of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Very great modifications have had to be made, but this theory has a permanent significance which lies in the introduction of the idea of progress into human life. The world of history is certainly orderly, making a science of history possible. However, this is not the same as saying that history has followed a predetermined course. Every present has come out of the past, but each present is not the only one that might have come out. The world that now is is simply one of many possible worlds. It is not the only orderly world that was possible. The Puritan might have settled in Virginia and the Cavalier in Massachusetts; and if immigration had been thus reversed, the history of the country would have been quite different. But it would have been just as orderly and as susceptible of scientific treatment.

But there is more in human life than mere process.

There are also culminations with final effect and absolute value in the course of the process. Geology tells of an age in which all conditions were favorable for depositing in the earth vast stores of coal. That age has passed, and it is not likely that the world will ever again go through a coal-producing period. The process of evolution seems to have continued until it culminated in man, and here it registered final value. There is no indication that a new organism will ever be produced to succeed man, and henceforth progress must lie in the direction of finer quality of the individual and larger complexity in social organization. Great cultural epochs have their period of gestation, and when they bring forth in art or literature they give to the world a product of final value. The race does not move at even pace along an ascending spiral. The rate is sometimes enormously accelerated, and there may be progress at one point and retrogression at another. Dr. Foster writes:

Of one thing we may be sure, at all events: the ongoing of existence is not a matter of even pace, of ortholinear uniformity. In the vast cosmic process as a whole, there have been crises; if at times a day has been a thousand years, at other times a thousand years have been but a day. Forces that have gathered slowly hasten to a consummation in such velocity that a cosmic epoch ensues. Which epoch is most effective and significant in the history of this tumultuous universe is not to be determined by the mere date of its occurrence. And in the differentiation and specialization of aboriginal cosmic stuff into separate worlds there is no antecedent impossibility in the way of one of these worlds being larger than any of the others. Similarly, if we think of that section of the cosmic movement which we call human history, we find no dead-level uniformity there and no constant quantitative or qualitative advancement. Each new moment is

not more effective than the preceding, nor is it the home of more value. As in the individual life, so in history, there are great moments. The self-effectuation of a spiritual world in history—where an inner history is set off in strong relief from an outer, an esoteric from an exoteric, a real from an apparent—is not consummated by quiet and uniform accumulation. The supremely worthful does not happen every day. Turning points come in which new forces break forth—new fountains from rocks where no sign of water is—and impel the life of the spirit in new directions; and such breaking forth will bring with it a freshness of life and a pureness of expression that are classic.<sup>4</sup>

The course of religion has not been marked by uniform and steady progress. There have been long barren stretches and also times of deterioration. A people may move on for generations and centuries without apparent change, and then there may come a great outburst of spiritual power. There is no known law by which the future of religion in any country may be predicted. Some of the greatest revivals in history have broken out when they were least expected. There must always be a conjunction between the occasion and the man. Eucken declares that the history of religion reveals the necessity for taking account of great personalities as the prime factors in determining its course. Where these personalities come from is shrouded in the mystery which surrounds the nature of every solitary person born into the world. Heredity and environment may explain much, but not all, or even the chief thing. Russell H. Conwell once remarked that we can no more tell where the great man of the next

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<sup>4</sup>"The Finality of the Christian Religion," p. 268. University of Chicago Press.

generation will come from than we can tell where the lightning will strike next summer.

These great creative spirits sometimes come singly, sometimes in groups, sometimes in succession. But come as they may, and when they come, a new era is born. And, as Whitehead says, they produce something of final value:

The history of culture shows that originality of expression is not a process of continuous development. There are antecedent periods of slow evolution. Finally, as if touched by a spark, a very few persons, one, two, or three, in some particular province of experience, express completely novel intuitions. Such intuitions can be responded to, analyzed in terms of their relationships to other ideas, fused with other forms of experience, but as individual primary intuitions within their own province of experience they are not surpassed. The world will not repeat Dante, Shakespeare, Socrates, or the Greek tragedians. These men, in connection with the tiny groups forming their immediate environments of associates and successors and perhaps of equals, add something once and for all. We develop in connection with them, but not beyond them, in respect to those definite intuitions which they flashed upon the world.<sup>5</sup>

If there will be no repetition of Homer, Dante, and Shakespeare, it is not likely that the world will ever produce another Bible. There was a great Bible-making age, just as there was a great coal-producing age, and one has as certainly passed as the other. The world does not need a new Bible, or even supplementary scriptures to be placed in the canon. If certain elemental human characteristics have been enshrined in classic literature once for all, it is certain that the sacred book, which deals with such perma-

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<sup>5</sup> "Religion in the Making," p. 134. By A. N. Whitehead. Macmillan.

nent interests as God, man, life, death, and eternity, will never become antiquated. Such Bible as we now have we will have to the end of time. And it is just the Bible that the human race needs. There is great argument about the nature of inspiration, and theories which will not square with the facts have been propounded from time to time, but the Bible is entirely satisfactory for the uses for which it was intended. Newman Smyth gives this incident, which illustrates the ability of the Bible to survive the defense of its friends:

One of the best answers in a nutshell to the controversial perplexities of that time was given by a colored preacher at a council for his ordination. The ecclesiastical atmosphere was surcharged with the question of the inspiration of the Scriptures, and the council was expecting at any moment to have it break out. After the candidate had finished his statement of faith, one of the older and more conservative members was not slow in seizing the opportunity to put him under questioning. He said: "I did not hear him say anything about the Holy Scriptures. I would like to know what he believes about the inspiration of God's Holy Word." Immediately the colored brother replied: "I think, sir, it is sufficiently inspired for all practical purposes." The effect was instantaneous. The council burst into laughter, the questioner fell back upon his seat, and nothing further was said.<sup>6</sup>

There is finality in the revelation which came through the prophets of Israel. Their utterances concerning the righteousness and love of God have eternal value. They separated between the false views that had been held concerning the divine nature and the true conception by seizing upon the highest human apprehensions of morality and inter-

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<sup>6</sup>"Recollections and Reflections," p. 95. By Newman Smyth. Scribner's.

preting the divine in terms of the moral consciousness. Along this path they arrived at a pure Monotheism, which the nation at last understood and proclaimed to the world. Jehovah did not become the sole deity by "mere push and power," as Zeus might have expelled all but himself from the pantheon. It was because of his righteousness that he supplanted all other deities. Monotheism was the result of the moralization of the conception of the divine. The law of this holy God, revealed by the prophets, is final law.

The universe is more a continuous act than a process. Bergson pictures creative evolution as the spontaneous urge and outreach of life. We speak of the facts of nature—the facts to be observed in producing the theories of any branch of science. But a fact is not a bit of dead substance; it is *factum*—something *done*. An event is something that transpires, and may or may not call into mind the cause of it, but an *act* is unthinkable apart from an agent. All the facts of life are things done by some power. But an agent must be possessed of will. Therefore reality is best understood when expressed in terms of personality. And as creation culminates in personality, so human personality culminates in those unique persons who embody the final values of life. Here, as Streeter says, we come directly upon Jesus Christ, who is at once the final revelation of God and the supreme achievement of man:

The inspiration of humanity is the roll call of its famous men. But does any one of these represent an absolute ideal—an ideal, that is, which is wholly and without qualification worthy of imitation? And if we have no criterion, no objective standard of the ideal, how are we to say exactly where or



to what extent any one model is defective? The very richness of our heritage of great men makes for confusion. Also an ideal tends to be dynamic in proportion to the clearness of its outline. There is, then, nothing intrinsically unreasonable in the idea that at some time in the course of history creative evolution should have produced a super-hero who could stand to humanity as the embodiment of a kind of super-ideal, capable of providing the rallying standard which men require. Such a person, appearing at a certain stage of man's development, would have been, of all possible variations in the species, the one most effectively creative. To our fathers Christ was such a super-hero. Is he such to us? or must we look elsewhere for our Super-man? Or are we to say that the Power—or Person—manifested in creative evolution has not as yet proved capable of this supreme creative act and that we must do the best we can without it? <sup>7</sup>

There is no sound philosophy which can preclude the possibility of a final revelation of the character of God in human life. The incarnation of the divine is a question of fact. Has there appeared in the course of history a person who presents the goal of humanity in advance and by virtue of his presence within the race guarantees the goal? There is abundant testimony to the fact that divine revelation and human aspiration culminated in Jesus Christ. It is irrelevant to ask, Was it possible? The laws of history are not *a priori* suppositions; they must be ascertained through the facts of history.<sup>8</sup> The only relevant question is, Is it true? Values which transcend time may appear in time and change its course forever afterwards. "Human life," says Foster,

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<sup>7</sup>"Reality," p. 179. Macmillan.

<sup>8</sup>See chapter on "Past Fact and Present Power" in "The Principle of Authority." By P. T. Forsyth. Hodder & Stoughton.

"is not in the stream of time as a drop of water is in the river, but as a strong swimmer is there." Men are not in the current as straws upon the surface, but as swimmers who may choose their direction and strike out for a landing. Of course, many people do drift, but now and then there appears a great personality who not only swims against the current, but changes the direction of it for all time. And the experience of religion, as it has been opened up in Jesus Christ, is that there is in this human stream one superlatively powerful swimmer who rides upon its flood and directs its course. "Christianity," this same writer truly says, "does not found its conviction of a rational end and meaning in the history of the human spirit upon the contemplation of the totality of history, but upon that course of historical development which reaches its culmination in Jesus." We look to history for a record of the life of Jesus, and when we receive the facts from this source, "the *judgment of faith* is that this Jesus Christ, son of his people and of his time, yet on account of the content of his person, by virtue of which he is Saviour and Lord, is self-uplifted above the whole evolutionary series and has conquered release from all the relativities inconsistent with his being the home of eternal and permanent values."

After having intimated that there is something final in religion and suggested where it is to be found, we may pause to indicate where it may not be expected. Finality cannot be looked for in a state or condition of an individual or of any group of individuals. There is no "ideal state of society." There never was, and there is no reason for thinking there ever will be. Many schemes, from Plato's "Repub-

lic" to Bellamy's "Looking Backward," have been presented as the perfect social organization, but constitutions and customs grow out of experience. John Locke sat in his study three thousand miles away and prepared a constitution for North Carolina, but it fell stillborn from the brain of the great philosopher. The real constitution of the "Old North State" was wrought out of the vicissitudes and trials of the people as they wrestled with the pioneer conditions of the New World. The stream of life flows on, sometimes rapidly, sometimes slowly, but it always flows. Life never attains to fixedness in this world, and we may suppose that growth and change attend life in all worlds. The world beyond is probably no less interesting than this. Surprises will never cease. The "kingdom of heaven" is always at hand, and all who act from pure motives are in it. It may come to an individual or a community at any time, anywhere, and any man may come into it at will, but it cannot be thrust upon any against his will. The individual is not compelled to partake of the sins of his environment, neither does he necessarily become pure when he is surrounded by good company. Sorley gives us this glimpse into the life to come:

What lies beyond we cannot tell, and it is vain to imagine. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." But if free minds endure, it must surely be for a range of activity suited to the capacities and values which they have acquired in their mundane experience. And if, here or elsewhere, they attain that complete harmony between will and ideal in which moral perfection consists, they will surely be fitted thereby for nobler enterprise. It is not true that it is impossible for a morally perfect man to exist and work in an imperfect world. The view is merely an echo of a narrowly hedonistic theory of

what constitutes goodness and perfection. On the contrary, the more perfect a man is, the greater is the variety of conditions in which he will master each situation and prove his goodness. As long as the time-process continues we can conceive free minds as working toward the goal of moral perfection; we can even think of them as, themselves made perfect, still pressing forward into new and untried ways, enhancing the values of the world. It is not only evil (that is, moral evil) that has to be mastered. The artist or the man of science has not been fighting against moral evil in his effort to produce things of beauty or to enlarge the sphere of knowledge; and yet he has been producing values. In this way it is conceivable that moral evil might be overcome and yet that adventure would not cease. There would still be call and room for pressing further into the unknown and making all things subservient to the values which it is the function of free spirits to realize.<sup>9</sup>

Neither can finality be looked for in an organization or institution. The Church is not one institution, but several or many institutions. The ideal of the Church as one organization, articulated throughout and directed by one head, once prevailed, and throughout the Middle Ages the Church was identified with one form of organization apart from which there was no salvation. But that ideal was shattered by the forces of history and was banished, probably never to return. With the many irreconcilable views concerning what it takes to constitute the Church, uniformity of organization does not seem possible, and it is doubtful whether it will ever be desirable. Since human nature is as it is, the freedom necessary for religious growth would not be likely to be recognized by an organization which held a monopoly on the means of grace. The con-

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<sup>9</sup>"Moral Values and the Idea of God," p. 516. By W. R. Sorley. Macmillan.

ference which will meet at Lausanne this summer to consider questions of faith and order will hardly accomplish much toward unifying the Church as an organization. However, it will bring representatives of various organizations together in Christian fellowship and help the members of each Church to recognize the Christians of other Churches and the Churches of other Christians. The differences of view are so radical that Christians will have to learn to respect each other and agree to differ upon such questions as creeds, orders, and sacraments.

Finality can never be reached in a system of doctrine. "The unity of the faith" does not mean a unity of belief. A system of doctrine could not be made permanent without at the same time giving permanence to the conditions out of which it arose. Whitehead thus indicates what the finality of the early creeds would imply:

In estimating the validity of a dogma, it must be projected against the alternatives to it within that sphere of thought. You cannot claim absolute finality for a dogma without claiming a commensurate finality for the sphere of thought within which it arose. If the dogmas of the Christian Church from the second to the sixth centuries express finally and sufficiently the truths concerning the topics about which they deal, then the Greek philosophy of that period had developed a system of ideas of equal finality. You cannot limit the inspiration to a narrow circle of creeds. A dogma—in the sense of a precise statement—can never be final; it can only be adequate in its adjustment of certain abstract concepts.<sup>10</sup>

The theologian, therefore, must accommodate himself to the view that he cannot hope to provide a system which will endure to the end of time. Parents

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<sup>10</sup> "Religion in the Making," p. 130. Macmillan.

sometimes build houses which they hope will last for many generations, but it is really a blessing that materials crumble into dust, for each generation is thereby granted the privilege of building its own habitations. The theologian best serves the whole future of humanity by serving his own generation in the best possible way. Dr. Lee says:

It is not to be supposed that in contending for a scientific establishment in which to house our conceptions of religious realities we are proposing to erect an inelastic structure to shelter not only our present ideas of spiritual facts, but also such as future generations of religious thinkers may form from the consideration of the same facts. This would be to do in our day what the fathers attempted to do for us in their day. This would forestall future spiritual enterprise and be equivalent to the assumption that those who come after us will not have as much religious sense as we have. The religious establishments we build to-day by the rules of the scientific method we may expect to be altered and enlarged to meet the spiritual needs of coming ages. We know that the theological dwelling our fathers built for themselves and for succeeding generations does not furnish religious shelter and houseroom for the humanity of the twentieth century, and we can hardly expect to succeed in building better than they did. We may congratulate ourselves if we construct for our time a theological abode that will be made as much use of by all the people of the present generation as was made by all the people in their day of the house they built in the fear of God.<sup>11</sup>

There cannot be finality in knowledge, because "we know in part." The apostle says that only faith, hope, and love abide, and knowledge will cease in the sense that all partial views will be swallowed up in wider generalizations. We no sooner

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<sup>11</sup> "The Religion of Science," p. 52. By James W. Lee. Revell.

say, "We have our facts; go to now, let us systematize them," than other facts begin to come in, and lo! the work must be done all over again. There has never been any system of theology or philosophy that has endured without modification for so much as a century. All the infallibilities, finalities, decrees, and bulls taken together cannot arrest the movement of human experience and nail a product of any age down in fixedness. One of the most patent fictions that ever obtained wide credence is that "Rome never changes." Newman Smyth writes:

Reformations in the life and thought of the Church have their springs in the far uplands of spiritual experience; as from many sources far inland in the springtime the rivers, breaking loose from their worn channels, flow down in a flood to the sea. The Modernist movement in the Roman Catholic Church was an outbreak at a few points here and there of the scientific and religious knowledge and thought of the incoming new age. It is much the same movement which has overflowed and broken loose from the inherited dogmatisms of the Protestant world. Some among us may still look upon it with amazing forebodings as though it would carry away like a flood our established beliefs, leaving a dreary waste behind it. But the whole history of the spirit of the Lord in the renewals of Christian life and thought justifies no such gloomy forebodings. It may, indeed, at times and places carry away values that may need to be recovered; but as a moving of the churches in the Spirit of the Lord it comes not to destroy, but to fulfill. In the Roman Church as a revolutionary, or rather, we should say, an evolutionary, movement it has been suppressed. But much waits beneath the surface until its hour of revealing shall come.<sup>12</sup>

And yet Christianity remains and renews its youth. It not only holds its own in countries where it has long been established, but it also moves out

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<sup>12</sup> "Recollections and Reflections," p. 165. Scribner's.

into all lands and takes its place as the chief force in molding the life of the nations. Christianity is destined to become the religion of the world. A noted Japanese scholar, not himself a Christian, says that the automatic operation of the law of the survival of the fittest would alone insure that Christianity will be the world's religion.

This capacity of Christianity for surviving amid the changes which come with each succeeding generation and spreading to all parts of the earth is derived from the spirit of the Founder. There is something final in Jesus Christ. Religion came to such perfection of expression in him that we may say with Weinell, "After Jesus it is his religion or none." Jesus is an ultimate. In him there appears in time a value which partakes of eternity.

However, the finality of Jesus is not shared by the creeds about Jesus. Creeds which have served well a passing time may cease to be convincing and even become a burden of belief, hindering the free movement of faith. It is remarkable that every age has found in Jesus that which its mind sought and its heart craved. The first disciples made him fit perfectly into the Jewish Messianic mold. When the gospel was carried into the Gentile world, Jesus became "the Lord" whom the mystery religions had vainly endeavored to supply. By the Greeks, he was recognized as the *Logos* of their philosophic thought. In the Middle Ages he appeared as the ideal doctor of the schoolmen. In an old church at Palermo there is a mosaic of the "*Pantos Krator*,"<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>The reproduction which the writer brought away with him has been mislaid, and the title is given from memory. The spelling may be incorrect.



which reproduces the traditional picture of Jesus and yet bears the cast of countenance and cut of eye of an Oriental ruler, reminiscent of the time when the Byzantine emperor or the Saracen ruled over the island of Sicily. All have found in Jesus what they desired and even read into him what they wished to find. All classes have claimed him, but none have been able to monopolize him, for he belongs to all races and classes of men. During the French Revolution he was "Citizen Jesus," in the van of the army marching toward "liberty, fraternity, equality." In 1876 Sarah Cleghorn wrote a poem on "Comrade Jesus," the last stanza of which reads:

Ah! let no local him refuse!  
Comrade Jesus hath paid his dues.  
Whatever other be debarred,  
Comrade Jesus hath his red card.

Jesus Christ is greater than any statement that has ever been written of him, larger than any mold into which he has been pressed. In that unusually fine book, "The Lord of Thought," which came out five years ago under the dual authorship of Lily Dougall and Cyril Emmet, both of whom have since passed within the veil, Miss Dougall wrote:

If we think of the majesty of God as opposed to, or different from, the humility Jesus exemplified; if we think of the power of God as in no way subject to limitations of life as Jesus was subject; if we think of the glory of God as a blinding magnificence which did not shine forth in the gentleness of Christ; if we think of God's holiness as something opposed to friendly association with sinners—then to call Jesus God is rather to vindicate the Judaism that opposed him than to be loyal to the spiritual illumination he offered. But if by divine tran-

scendence we mean an eternal Love which, entering by lowly doors, is able to develop beauty and truth and goodness in all that is—such a belief may bring us near to the heart of “the truth as it is in Jesus.” We can only be depressed by current controversies concerning the Godhead, but if Jesus, in his participation in human joys, in his fellowship with the faulty and the fallen, in his humorous criticism of the righteous, in his stern denunciation of the self-righteous, in his love of fine character, in his passion for truth and the welfare of men, in his power to cure the ills of mind and body, in his dependence on human friendship, in his majestic victory over defeat—if in all this the historic Jesus is the true and living revealer of the transcendent God, how great is our hope.<sup>14</sup>

A little girl who had attended a baptismal service and heard the magnificently robed bishop administer the vows to the candidates asked on the way home, “Mother, has the bishop been baptized?” “Yes, of course,” the mother replied; “how could you ask such a question?” “Well, then,” persisted the child, “why didn’t he give up the pomp and glory?”

The claim of Christianity to finality in religion does not rest upon the possession of a complete system of religious principles, delivered in so many words from the lips of Jesus. Some think that in the sayings of Jesus they have the very word of God. Their red-letter New Testament makes it convenient for them to turn through the Bible and see at a glance just what Jesus said. But what did Jesus say? It does not require the skill of the trained critic to recognize the difficulty in the way of ascertaining exactly what he said. The New Testament gives some of the things which Jesus is reported to have said, and we may be sure that the evangelists were

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<sup>14</sup>Op. cit., p. 224. Doran.

careful in making the record, but the variations in the accounts of the sayings make it clear that we have to reckon with the sources and the memory of the reporters in trying to determine the very words of Jesus. Often we cannot tell just what Jesus said, and it would leave room for uncertainty if Christianity depended upon such knowledge.

A generation ago there was a disposition upon the part of many earnest people to settle certain critical questions by an appeal to those utterances of Jesus which seemed to have some bearing upon the subject as the final and decisive word. Of this method, a noted English Bible scholar writes:

But it will be said, "Is it not true, after all, that for those who believe in the divinity of Christ these things are settled by his definite statements with reference to the Old Testament?" Naturally a Christian desires to be very reverent in treating any argument of this kind. Those of us who confess Christ as our Saviour and Lord naturally cannot take any appeal to his authority except in the most serious and reverent way. But the very fact that we take it in that way is to us a weighty caution that we ought not to invoke the authority of Christ in any cause he would not himself approve; and I am sure we ought not to make Christianity answer for its life by any argument of that kind. If I tell you Homer said so and so in the fourth book of the "Odyssey," am I to be regarded as tied down by that statement to the traditional view that the "Odyssey" was written by a man known as Homer, when as a matter of fact I know that this is very uncertain? . . . I hold also that we are not to regard our Lord as lifted in these matters above the knowledge of his time. He was like his brethren in all points except sin and was tempted to the uttermost in every point in which you and I are tempted. He necessarily had to enter into the inheritance of our lack of knowledge that he might become one of us. . . . Those who are truly helping faith are not those who are staking on the authority of Christ something it will not bear,

something indeed it was never intended to bear; but those who try to convince men that critical views, if they are in harmony with truth, cannot ultimately involve disloyalty to Christ.<sup>15</sup>

Jesus was conscious of his divine sonship, and he was also conscious of his place in the human race as a son of man. The New Testament record portrays him as doing the work proper to his mission as the world's Saviour, but it also very clearly shows that he labored under the limitations which the incarnation placed upon him. Jesus did not claim omniscience, and when the theologians created an imaginary figure clothed in the attributes which they regarded as necessary to the divine, they departed from the Christ of the Gospels and Epistles—notably Hebrews—and lost the human sympathy which was brought back into Christian experience through the adoration of the Virgin Mary. Gardner has this to say of this tendency:

There has been in the Church, and especially in the modern Protestant branches of the Church, a great deal of that Jesus worship which has tended to place Christ after the flesh in the seat of the Eternal. It has resulted in strange aberrations, such as the notion that Jesus in the cradle was at the same time on the throne of the universe, that God died on the cross, that all through his mortal life Jesus was conscious of super-human powers. It is embodied in many of our hymns and inspires some of our litanies. But it is a view which becomes utterly impossible to anyone with a historic sense, even if he has not been educated in historic method. For no one can read the Synoptic Gospels with even moderate attention and intelligence without seeing that they portray a marvelous being indeed, but one who lived as a man among men, whose knowledge was limited, who felt the human feelings of indignation, depression to the verge of despair, exultation,

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<sup>15</sup> "The Nature of Scripture." By A. S. Peake. Doran.

love, and hostility. Jesus was tempted on all points as we are, though without yielding. He spent nights in prayer to God: he felt that his own will had to be suppressed, in order to be in harmony with the divine will.<sup>18</sup>

Neither can we look for finality in what Jesus *did*, as if there were in his conduct a permanent example for all succeeding generations to follow. We cannot always ascertain from the record just what Jesus did. History presents him to the world, and the Jesus of history is as certain as history, but only that certain. The Man of Galilee appears in living colors as a real historical figure, and there is no more reason for questioning the fact that Jesus actually lived than there is for doubting the existence of any other person of ancient history. But no fact of the past enters directly into consciousness, and it is possible to question one detail and another of the life of Jesus. But when faith estimates the person presented by history, there is a certainty in this estimate as sure as life itself. Those who have partaken of the spirit of Jesus know that this spirit is the greatest reality they have ever known. Jesus is not strictly an example. He would not be a model for each man to pattern his life upon, even if every act could be certainly known from the hour of his birth to the day of his ascension, for every man has his own life to live—his own original calling—just as Jesus had his.

Once more, finality does not lie in a perfect code of ethics, furnished by Christianity for the whole world. Codes of ethics arise from the pressure of the sense of obligation upon given situations, and

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<sup>18</sup> "The Practical Basis of Christian Belief," p. 182. By Percy Gardner. Scribner's.

consequently they are valid to the point of detail only for the conditions under which they arose. When conditions change, the code changes also to meet new conditions. Of course, there are some principles valid for all time—principles so obvious that they do not need to be written down or formally enacted into law in order to become binding. They arise in the experience of the race and gain universal sanction. Where, for instance, is the code which first established monogamy? There is no formal legislation in the Bible repealing the laws by which the patriarchs and kings of the nation practiced polygamy, neither does the New Testament expressly condemn the practice. By the time the New Testament was written, the ideal of monogamy had entered so deeply into the mind of the civilized world that it did not require specific legislation. The early Church simply took it for granted. What was the moral code laid down by Jesus? What did he teach concerning divorce, for instance? One Gospel seems to represent him as condemning divorce under any and all circumstances, while in another the language allows for divorce upon the ground of conjugal infidelity. It is not likely that there would be any division of opinion in the Church on this question, if Jesus had laid down a definite law to be followed under any and all conditions.

The truth is that Christian morality is permanent for the very reason that it is not in the form of a code. Because it rests upon the response of the conscience to the voice of God as heard in new conditions which impose new duties, it is elastic enough to meet the moral requirements of any country or age. Gardner thus compares the ethics of Chris-

tianity with the ethics of Judaism and Moham-  
medanism:

Christianity is also, in a measure, a religion of authority, since it has sacred books and definite organizations. But it differs from Judaism and Islam, in that what is laid down by authority is not a detailed code of practices, but the assertion of principles and ideals. Very often, as indeed in Central Africa at the present time, this fact puts the higher religion at a disadvantage as compared with the lower. But Christianity has, after all, the enormous advantage that it can change, can evolve in the direction of the ideal. It is free from the bondage of the letter and free to take in the fresh revelations of the Divine Spirit.<sup>17</sup>

The element of finality in the morals of Christianity is to be found in the spirit of loving obedience which the consciousness of sonship places in the human heart and not in the perfection of a letter code. It is in the fulfillment of that great word of Jeremiah: "After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people."

The kind of finality that we may expect to find in Christianity is thus indicated by Dean Willard L. Sperry:

There is a trite phrase in current circulation regarding "the finality of the Christian religion." If this phrase implies that we have in the Gospels or in subsequent Christian thought a complete account of reality and a definitive code of conduct, rendering all scientific inquiry and all ethical experiment superfluous, the words are without meaning. Christianity has not given us a complete account of the universe or a system of ethics which is beyond the need of interpretation or adventure. If, however, the words mean that the Christian religion is concerned with the kingdom of ends and that its

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<sup>17</sup> "The Practical Basis of Christian Belief," p. 111. Scribner's.

first and most distinctive transactions take place within that kingdom, they are true.<sup>18</sup>

The permanent element in Christianity is in Jesus Christ, and the significance of Jesus comes through the capacity of the divine for the human and of the human for the divine. Man was made in the divine image, and therefore he is akin to God. If God and man were essentially different and mutually exclusive, it would be impossible for God to enter into the race's life without losing his divinity and for man to become a partaker of the divine nature without sacrificing his humanity. It is true that the vast and deadly perversions seen in individuals and society make man appear wholly in contrast with God, but the most characteristic feature of man, his moral sense and his ability to recognize the right and to aspire to a true life, does not belong to the temporal order. Such conceptions as right and wrong could never lodge in the mind of a temporal being who did not in any way partake of the character of God. Man as he *is* presents a contrast with the divine, but man as he *ought to be* is in the likeness of God.

Sometimes it is asked, Was Jesus a mere man? This is a meaningless and impossible question, because it is based upon the assumption that there is such a thing as legitimate human life apart from the divine. There is no such thing as *mere* man. Man is not to be thought of or realized apart from his destiny as a child of God. The destiny upon every child born into the world is to become a child of God, just as the destiny upon an acorn is to become an

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<sup>18</sup> "Reality in Worship," p. 157. By Willard L. Sperry. Macmillan.



oak, and he must either become a child of God or nothing, just as the acorn must become an oak or nothing.

God, who is transcendent in that he is above the world, and immanent in that he is in all nature and human life, is *enhumaned* in Jesus Christ, who is "God manifest in the flesh." Jesus was filled with all the fullness of God. Jesus Christ is the divine personality reproduced in a human personality, so that in him we see the character of the almighty power whose energy is revealed on every hand. Deissmann says:

I would say that the originality of Jesus lies in his whole personality, in the peculiar energy of his experience of the living God. It is not his concepts that are original, but his power; not his formulæ, but his confessions; not his dogmas, but his faith; not his system, but his personality. The originality of Jesus lies in the comprehensive uniqueness of his inner life; the new epoch-making thing is himself.<sup>19</sup>

The fact in the innermost consciousness of Jesus, revealed in his work and words, was the clear and indubitable realization of his sonship to God. He knew God to be his Father. There was in him the certainty of a special and unique communion with God, which carried with it the conviction that the relation existing between him and the eternal God was that of Father and Son. His sonship was both an endowment and an achievement. It was his nature to be the Son of God, but this nature was realized in consciousness as he met the issues of life as the Son of his Father and increased in wisdom

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<sup>19</sup> "The Religion of Jesus and the Faith of Paul." By Adolf Deissmann. Doran.

and stature and in favor with God and man. Of the growth of this consciousness Streeter says:

Would Christ have told others that to enter the kingdom of heaven they must become as little children unless he had verified the fact by personal experience? Just because he was the first and only grown man of high courage and powerful intellect to try that and no other method of approach to God, he could say, "No one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him." Thereby he won (or perhaps he did not have to win it) an insight into the nature of God that told him that God not only is, but asks to be treated as, "our Father." Those best worship God who think of him first and foremost, not as Creator, not as Sovereign, not as Judge, but just as Parent to be loved and trusted. And if we may judge from words and actions which are clearly the spontaneous expression of the inner mind of Jesus, we must conclude that alike in sorrow and in joy this attitude was by him completely realized. Legend had spoken of Abraham as "the friend" of God; Jesus thought, spoke, and acted as "the son."<sup>20</sup>

But this sense of sonship could be realized in human life, because man as he should be—as God has always intended him to be—is essentially God's child. Jesus Christ entered into the race to bring it to its destiny in spite of the tragic lapse of sin, and when he realized his own sonship he opened the way for every man to rise above the merely human and enter into the consciousness of sonship to God. Streeter again says:

But this conviction of sonship to God, though in one sense unique, is not proclaimed by him as an exclusive personal privilege. He is the pioneer, the one to whom and through whom the full secret of God's goodness has been first disclosed, but now it is an open secret. The main burden of his mes-

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<sup>20</sup> "Reality," p. 185. Macmillan.

sage is that this parenthood of God, this overflowing tenderness and individual care, so far from being confined to the one unique Messiah Son, is for all—for the publican, the sinner, and the little child. All are God's children, and all who recognize the fact and respond in love and trust may aspire in the fullest sense to become the sons of God. They may become, and are exhorted to become, *like* God.<sup>21</sup>

The great and essential truth which is expressed in the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus Christ is that Jesus truly and adequately represents God. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." The supreme power in the universe has the character of the person who lived in Palestine and died upon the cross for the sins of men. To know Jesus is to know God. Without doubt the truest index to the divine is in the moral and spiritual life in humanity, and not in the starry heavens or in nature's automatic processes, and many men and women have felt and shared the divine love. But in all other persons, there has been much that pointed in another direction, and the consciousness has been so beclouded by sin that the revelation has been intermixed with doubt and error. It is only in Jesus that the divine love came to full and unhindered expression. In the gospel there is the final revelation, and in those who receive it there is the full recognition of God in the revelation. What more can God say or do to make himself known to men than he has said and done in Jesus Christ? What more can men know about the character and love of God than they learn through the holy life, the sacrificial death, and the triumphant resurrection of Jesus Christ? In him God speaks his last word to a sinful race, in him God

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<sup>21</sup> "Reality," p. 186. Macmillan.

does the greatest thing that everlasting love can do to redeem the race.

Jesus had, and expressed, perfect devotion to God and saving love to man. He was not only obedient in spirit; he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And his death on the cross expressed to the full the redeeming love of God as it was felt in the heart of Jesus Christ. Here, as Streeter says, we come upon an act final and eternally significant:

Called to an office of a majesty the highest conceivable, Christ lived a life of complete self-devotion to the service of his fellow men in a cause which he believed, and with good reason, to be God's cause; he braved a death of utter failure, torture, and disgrace in the *hope* (not with the explicit knowledge) at that price to realize on earth an unsurpassable ideal. Such an expression in action of such an ideal has in it the quality of an "absolute"; there is in its perfection a certain *finality*. Such a life is a *ne plus ultra*; it is not merely something which before or since has been unequaled; it is something which one cannot even imagine as transcended.<sup>22</sup>

Here Jesus reached a height beyond which it was impossible to go. There had been unselfish devotion before. Men and women had always been performing acts of heroism which revealed the tragic side of life and reflected the unselfish suffering in the heart of God. But the grand climactic act of all revelation came when the lowly and holy Jesus poured out his life upon the cruel cross. Henceforth and forevermore the symbol of the divine must be the cross. Dr. Lee says:

No man in all history ever moved up from the level of earthiness, except as he used the cross of Christ to subordinate

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<sup>22</sup>"Reality," p. 189. Macmillan,

his lower to his higher nature. Now, what earnest, self-sacrificing men had been doing in a limited way among all nations Christ appeared in history to do completely. So after him the principle of sacrifice he practiced was given his name; it was called the Cross of Christ. It was called, after him, the Cross of Christ, because he emphasized it and illustrated its meaning to the extent of sacrificing his life in devotion to it as the only means of saving the world.<sup>23</sup>

Jesus did not become the world's Saviour by teaching the Fatherhood of God. Others had taught that great truth in their limited way. The Greeks had their poems which referred to men as the offspring of God, and the Jews, who had long thought of God as the Father of the nation, speak not infrequently in their later writings of him as Father of the righteous individual. Jesus revealed Fatherhood and became the Saviour by being the first true son. He realized sonship first and taught it next. He did not merely preach the gospel; he *was* the gospel. Hence the core of his message was not a word about God, but an invitation to come to himself. Since he was the true son, all might realize their sonship by receiving the divine love which was reaching humanity through him. Beyond this it is impossible to go. There may be unending progress in it, but men can never reach a higher level of life than the consciousness of sonship to the divine.

Finality also appears in the teaching of Jesus when he sums up all religion in the two great commandments of love to God and man. Others had taught these truths, it is true, but they had taught them among many other things. The uniqueness

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<sup>23</sup> "The Religion of Science," p. 284. Revell.

of Jesus here lies as much in what he left out as in what he included.

"There will be constant change," writes Streeter, "in the ways of education, the codes, the institutions which attempt to give practical realization to the principle of the love of man. Development in these ways will be never-ending. But the ideal as apprehended and as defined by Jesus does not admit of improvement or advance. *It is either false, or it is final.*" The same writer says of the two great commandments, upon which, Jesus said, hang all the law and the prophets:

By the selection from the whole range of Jewish literature of these two sentences, as embodying between them the essence of religion and ethics, Christ effected one of those master simplifications which not infrequently inaugurate new eras in human progress. Considered as a summary expression of the moral and religious ideal, it has a quality to which the term "finality" may properly be applied, in that it states a foundation principle which, so far as we can conceive, cannot in the nature of things ever be transcended. Once grant the existence of a personal God—the source of all goodness, beauty, truth—love is the only adequate expression of the ideal attitude of man toward him. Again, the maxim "Love thy neighbor as thyself" has a quality which we may style "absolute." As definition it cannot be improved upon; and the ideal which is defined is one toward which the higher minds in all countries and in all ages have been slowly and painfully feeling their way. And if it is a true ideal at all, it is completely true; for the simple reason that, *if* the right track lies in that direction, you may have reached its end.<sup>24</sup>

If it be true, as Joseph Klausner says (in italics), that "*throughout the Gospels there is not one item of ethical teaching which cannot be paralleled either in the Old Testament, the Apocrypha, or in the Talmudic*

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<sup>24</sup> "Reality," p. 107. Macmillan.

*and Midrashic literature of the period near to the time of Jesus,"*<sup>25</sup> then the conclusion cannot be avoided that Jesus gathered together the wheat from the chaff, separated the moral and spiritual from the merely ceremonial, fulfilled in himself the requirements of the law, and became the Founder of the universal faith by releasing religion from the shackles of divers washings, and all such things, and setting it forth in terms of love to God and man.

Jesus did not intend to make a new religion. He lived the religion which had come to inadequate expression in the forms of various religions, and intended to bring salvation to the whole world through the universal application of the law of love. He was indifferent to the formal ceremonies of his own inherited religion and never prescribed a ritual for his followers. He was willing for every man to retain the forms which had been handed down to him or which he might have selected. Paul looked upon religions in the same way. He declared that circumcision was nothing and that the Jew might retain his ancestral practices. The whole purpose of the gospel was to unite Jew and Gentile by making each a new creature in Christ Jesus. The world could not be saved by a unification of religious practices. The one harmonizing and cementing bond was divine love. Stanley Jones gives an incident which illustrates the aim of the gospel. He had been talking to two of Gandhi's followers one day and had told them that the compact between the Hindu and the Mohammedan religions for political action was not

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<sup>25</sup> "Jesus of Nazareth: His Life, Times, and Teaching." By Joseph Klausner, Macmillan,

a proper basis for united patriotic aspiration. "You should base it," he said, "upon the unchanging fact that you are all Indians." "But, Mr. Jones," one of them replied, "isn't it our Christian duty to help our Mohammedan brethren in their difficulties?" "A Hindu talking about his Christian duty toward his Mohammedan brethren!" exclaims Dr. Jones.

If we could only forget the quarrels and antipathies of history long enough to consider the gospel of Jesus, all men of good will would come together in the fellowship of love. Jesus fulfilled man's capacity for God. He is the certain way to God. Christianity is not just one more religion; it is the fulfillment of all religions. "What difference does it make what a man's religion is?" a kind-hearted Jewish woman once said to the writer. "Let every man keep his own religion. What do I care what a man's religion is, so he is a good man!" In that exclamation lies the whole point of the religion of Jesus. The one sole object of it is to make of every person "a good man."

There is finality in Jesus in his revelation of the attitude of God to man and of the right attitude of each man to God and to his fellow men. The possible views concerning these attitudes are not many. They are largely covered by the world's great religions, as these are represented in the life and teaching of their founders. Buddha thought that Eternal Being was indifferent to human weal or woe and sought peace through the cessation of desire; Confucius advocated a respectful recognition of the unknown powers of heaven and due regard for the customs of society; Mohammed preached utter submission to a transcendent God; Jesus called men to the



attitude of loving trust in the Heavenly Father and unselfish love toward each other. One of these attitudes is true and final. Which is it? The human heart cannot stop short of that relation which makes all men children of God and brothers to one another. Other attitudes have been passed through, of course. The Jew considered religion a question of keeping the revealed law, and consequently he thought of God as the great Judge. There was a recurrence of this attitude in the Middle Ages, when the theologians, inheriting the Roman Jurisprudence, elaborated the legal view of the relation of God to man in their theories of the atonement. But the only attitude that can finally satisfy the human heart is that held and proclaimed by Jesus—absolute confidence in a Fatherly God and unselfish devotion to the service of man.

If the revelation of God is to be thought of as ever reaching clearness and completion in human life through a unified and consistent personality, we cannot look away from Jesus or beyond him for that revelation. Even as he is presented by an earnest Jew, Jesus Christ reveals God as the heart of humanity must desire him to be.<sup>26</sup> "His heart went out to the downtrodden, to those sorry wretches who could win their way to God neither with costly sacrifices nor erudite learning." Jesus declared that, no matter how unlettered men might be, they could be taken into the kingdom of God, for it was repentance alone that could make one eligible for entrance into that kingdom. "Such a gospel was

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<sup>26</sup> See "This Believing World," p. 264. By Lewis Browne. Macmillan.

literally saturated with heresy," because the cult, "with its priests and levites, its elaborate temple and costly parade, depended entirely upon wealth for its existence." But these heresies were not without precedent in Israel, for "innumerable prophets had arisen before to attack the greedy priests, and the rabbis themselves reviled in their Talmud the hypocritical and bigoted in their midst." "What really marked Jesus as one unlike any preacher that had come before him was not so much what he said as the authority on which he said it." "His tone was not that of a mere prophet, but almost that of God himself." "It took only a little while for his fame to spread throughout Galilee, and soon great crowds came out to see and hear him wherever he went. He was often heckled by the elders in the synagogues, and more than once he was slandered and persecuted." At last the day came when Jesus determined to go out from Galilee and carry his gospel to the rest of his people. He went to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover, taking his twelve chief followers with him. "Then came swift tragedy." "A great mob had rushed out to meet him, thinking he was an arch-Zealot who had come to lead them in bloody rebellion against Rome; but when they began to see that he wanted them to make peace with God, not war against Rome, they deserted him as quickly as they had flocked to his support." "The priests at once began plotting decisive measures against him, for they hated him no less than men of similar kidney had hated every other prophet of Israel." "He was hurriedly tried by a Jewish court, which seems to have been made up largely of priests," and adjudged guilty. "They were afraid of Jesus,"

not merely because his heresies endangered their own position, but even more because the excitement which he had aroused among the masses might endanger the peace of the whole land. "So in a panic the elders of the Jews took this young preacher and turned him over to the Roman governor," by whom he was sentenced to die.

There was no justice in it all. How could one expect justice in times so tense and a land so mad? The governor, Pontius Pilate, could have had no understanding of what the young carpenter had done or had dreamed of doing. . . . And the very next day the life of that young Galilean was snuffed out. The Roman soldiers took him to the top of a hill near by, scourged him with rods, crowned him in derision with a wreath of thorns, and nailed him to a cross. They nailed him to a cross between two thieves, and over his head they carved the mocking words, "King of the Jews." And there in mortal agony he hung for hours. . . . As he hung there on the cross of shame, he was alone, deserted. Gone were the huzzahing crowds; gone even were his own trusted disciples. Only a little knot of desolated women stood by to watch him breathe his last. . . . The sun began to set, and the wild violet glow in the west crept up till it lost itself in the blue of the evening sky. . . . He began to moan. Brokenly he moaned as the throes of death came over him. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" he begged. And then he died.

"When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss  
And pour contempt on all my pride.  
Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

"But he died only to come to life again," Browne continues; "to come to a life more enduring, more wondrously potent than had ever been vouchsafed

to him in the days before his shameful death. Indeed, he *literally* came to life again—according to those who had most earnestly followed him. . . . They were overwhelmingly convinced that Jesus had really come to life again and was now in heaven waiting to return once more.” And we may add, the apostles also learned to see in this supreme act of human sin the final act of God’s redeeming love. By the strange alchemy of the skies “man’s worst,” as Forsyth says, “was turned into God’s best.”

Jesus did not define God or present an exhaustive picture of him, for this cannot be done in human language. God is greater than all his works or words. There is nothing which can completely picture the whole. Nor did Jesus exclude other pictures, such as king or judge. He spoke continually of the “kingdom” of God. But he made “Father” essential and regulative. While God is ruler and judge, he is father first of all. This is the truest and best analogy that human experience affords.

There is finality in the spirit of Jesus, for the spirit of Jesus is the spirit of God. Father and Son are one in the Holy Spirit. The mind and heart of Jesus Christ revealed the eternal mind and heart and the disposition that should be in every man for time and eternity. The abiding and unsurpassable element in Christianity is this Spirit of Jesus Christ, which is also the Spirit of God. Men’s views may change, their customs and practices may vary with time and place, but the spirit of Christianity must forever be the spirit of Jesus Christ. It will be true to the world’s end, just as it was true in the time of the great apostle, “If any man have not the spirit of Christ,

he is none of his." In this mind, spirit, disposition of Jesus we have the most substantial fact in human experience and the central characteristic of God. Bishop Gore says:

Here in the Jesus of history lie the postulates of all true philosophizing about God and man. Not that we know God only as he is revealed in the incarnation; but there is the climax of our knowledge. There God reveals his very heart and motive, and it is self-sacrificing love. For Jesus of Nazareth, whom we see submitting himself to all properly human limitations, learning by experience the meaning of obedience, suffering, agonizing, dying, was throughout the very Son of God, personally God.<sup>27</sup>

The world has been slow to realize that God truly reveals himself in Jesus. Even the Church has hardly been able to take the gospel at its face value and really believe in a Christlike God. Men think there is a catch somewhere. They feel that the lightning flash is more characteristically divine than the light that shines in the face of Jesus Christ. But slowly and surely the revelation is getting home. The world is at last beginning to learn that the tyrannical exercise of arbitrary power is no more becoming in the King of kings than in an earthly potentate. Streeter remarks upon the change that has been taking place in men's views of the divine through the gospel of Jesus Christ:

Historic Christianity developed in an enslaved world which naturally thought of God as the imperial Cæsar of the universe, and neither the Church nor the world it tried to teach could easily think otherwise. But the ascription of divinity to Christ—whether metaphysically justifiable or not—meant

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<sup>27</sup> "Can We Then Believe?" p. 176. By Charles Gore. Scribner's.

that the word "divinity" must ultimately acquire a significance absolutely irreconcilable with the old Hebrew or pagan view of God. "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, . . . but I am in the midst of you as he that serves." Slowly through the ages the word "divinity" has changed its meaning. To-day men think of the King of kings less and less in terms of Cæsar, more and more in terms of Christ; they see in the moral grandeur of a heroic death, not the humiliation, but the majesty of God.<sup>28</sup>

There has also been not a little disappointment in the thought that the eternal majesty is more fully revealed in the simple life of a Galilean carpenter than in all the pomp and glory of the great ones of earth. Men have so long looked with childish admiration upon the barbaric splendor of Oriental monarchs that they cannot readily estimate the gilt and tinsel at their actual value. They incredulously ask, "Is God like that? Is the power of love really greater than the power of conquering armies? Can it be true that it is not by might, nor by power, but by the spirit which speaks with 'a still, small voice' in conscience?" Why, little ones can do that. If that is truly the divine, then babes and the weak ones of earth can share in and reveal the life of God.

Can it really be true? And if it is true, why is there so much to contradict it in daily life? If love is supreme, why do calamities come? Why does the evil man so often flourish and prosper in his wicked way? Perhaps, after all, the solution of life's dark riddle must be sought in another direction. So, men try to escape from Jesus. They cannot believe that it is really best and most like God to be meek and lowly in heart. They turn from self-devotion

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<sup>28</sup> "Reality," p. 149. Macmillan.

to self-expression as the real object in life, and thus, even while they confess with their lips, they deny with their hearts and lives. The history of the Church presents a strange and contradictory mixture of humble devotion and worldly ambition, and there is some truth in the assertion that Christianity has never been tried.

Some deliberately repudiate the Christian conception of God and turn away from it, saying with Nietzsche that "Christianity is the greatest decadence in history." In protesting against the helplessness which naturalism entails, they go to the extent of proclaiming the unlimited sovereignty of the ego even against the providence of God, in whose gracious law alone true freedom is to be found. They are right in so far as they rebel against all forces that would enslave the human spirit. "Not to copy either tradition or nature, not to be enslaved by them, but in the use of both to organize the self, *to become persons*—it is this which morality and religion require and which science not only allows, but countenances." But the final truth is not in self-assertion. "What things were gain to me I counted loss." We try the strenuous life; we turn to work, civilization, commerce, conquest, only to return with chastened and broken spirits to the comfort, peace, and power that Jesus only can give. How true is this word of Forsyth:

But I can still hear the pertinacious citizen of his own age, who is a chauvinist or jingo of his own century as some are of their own country, who is totally disqualified for reading either his time or his land because he knows no other—I can hear him say: "Are not Abana and Pharpar at our own doors better than that provincial old Jordan? Are not science,

art, ethic, sentiment, and philanthropy, however defective, better than these Hebrew old clothes? Is the answer to the soul still in the worn old past and not in the modern spirit?" Yes, that is so. The answer is in the old past, in the historic cross of Christ or nowhere.<sup>29</sup>

The heart of youth is peculiarly susceptible to the appeal of the purity, sincerity, kindliness, and humanity of Jesus. But life's practical demands suggest compromise, and the great world of achievement through philosophy, science, industry, and politics seems more inviting than anything that the kingdom of heaven as preached by Jesus can offer. To the man immersed in affairs, that way of life seems remote and impracticable. The greatest temptation before the mind of our own America is to worship the god of efficiency. We turn everything into cash—even of politeness, personal magnetism, culture, things that should be sought for their own value, we ask what they will bring in the market place. The most sacred of all callings does not escape the mercenary taint. A few years ago, posters were tacked on doors and trees throughout a section of a Southern State advertising a meeting to be held in a town at a certain time. These posters carried a full-length picture of the preacher, under whose name were the words, "The highest paid evangelist in the Southern States"—words that would have brought a blush of shame to the cheek of Epictetus, the pagan philosopher, to say nothing of the apostle Paul.

The boasted superiority of the bustling West over the more quiet East does not lie where it is usually

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<sup>29</sup> "Positive Preaching and Modern Mind," p. 156. By P. T. Forsyth. A. C. Armstrong & Son.



placed. An American captain of industry, who was fostering a development in the Near East, had occasion to transact business with a banker in Damascus. He was politely received and after an hour's pleasant conversation was requested to return on the next day. When he appeared according to appointment his host again called for refreshments and gave him another hour's enjoyment over a delicious cup of coffee. Finally the business was arrived at and attended to on the fourth day, and then the American remarked upon the difference between America and the Near East, suggesting that it would be better for the Orient if it would get out of its slow ways and "show some speed." The banker quietly replied, "America is now where Damascus was two thousand years ago." Egypt, Persia, Babylon, Greece, Rome, all in turn tried the strenuous life. But each tired of it by and by. When Israel was nervously reaching out toward a world alliance for protection against a troublesome foe, a great prophet said, "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." There is nothing quite so disappointing as failure—except success. The world contains no substitute for the peace of God.

Fame is a bauble,  
Wealth is dross,  
Success is failure,  
And gain is loss.

We come back at last to what Forsyth calls "the mighty futility of the cross." The lone sufferer hanging there in desolation bearing the sin of a blind and willful world tells us more of the character of God than all the mighty empires that have flourished

—and passed—since the beginning of time. Jesus not only triumphed *over* death, but *in* it and *through* it. He won the heart of the world by dying to the world, and the sure road to victory for every man leads by the foot of the cross. In his last book of lectures, Dr. Henry Sloane Coffin quotes a great poem from the pen of a woman, whose name he does not give. This poem, to which the author gave the title "Pantas Elkuso" (I Will Draw All), is published anonymously in a recent "Anthology of the Cross"<sup>30</sup> and reads as follows:

Go, bitter Christ, grim Christ! haul if thou wilt  
Thy bloody cross to thine own bleak Calvary!  
When did I bid thee suffer for my guilt  
To bind intolerable claims on me?  
I loathe thy sacrifice; I am sick of thee.

They say thou reignest from the cross. Thou dost,  
And like a tyrant, thou dost rule by tears,  
Thou womanish Son of woman. Cease to thrust  
Thy sordid tale of sorrows in my ears,  
Jarring the music of my few short years.

I am battered and broken and weary and out of heart,  
I will not hear of talk of heroic things,  
But be content to play some simple part,  
Freed from preposterous, wild imaginings. . . .  
Men were not meant to walk as priests and kings.

Thou liest, Christ, thou liest; take it hence,  
That mirror of strange glories; I am I:  
What wouldst thou make of me? O cruel pretence,  
Drive me not mad so with the mockery  
Of that most lovely, unattainable lie!

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<sup>30</sup> "Redemption: An Anthology of the Cross," p. 302. Collected and Edited by George Stewart. Doran,

O King, O Captain, wasted, wan with scourging,  
Strong beyond speech, and wonderful with woe,  
Whither, relentless wilt thou still be urging  
Thy maimed and halt that have not strength to go? . . .  
Peace, peace, I follow. Why must we love thee so?

Here we come upon the last reality—the first and the last. The long course of the progressive revelation of the divine came to a head in the cross of Jesus Christ, beyond which it is impossible for God to go in either word or act in making known and giving effect to his saving love.

The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?  
So, the All-Great were the All-Loving too—  
So, through the thunder comes a human voice  
Saying, "O heart I made, a heart beats here!  
Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself!  
Thou hast no power nor mayst conceive of mine:  
But love I gave thee with myself to love,  
And thou must love me who have died for thee!"

If God did not speak in Jesus Christ, he has been dumb from the foundation of the world. If God is not Christlike, he is dethroned, and Jesus saves us *from* him rather than *to* him. The apostles were very sure that they had full access to the heart of the Eternal through Jesus Christ in whom the veil was taken away. Our experience is the same as theirs. We cannot know or desire any other or better Object of trust and devotion than the God who is "the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."



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